# MYSTICISM AND CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Professor M.L. Sharma is the former head of the Department of Philosophy at J.N.V. University, Jodhpur, Rajasthan. He completed his doctoral work in 1954 under the guidance of Professor V.H. Date and Professor R.D. Ranade (then Vice Chancellor of Allahabad University).

His book From *Idealism to Mysticism* (1975) received a glowing review in the Indian Express by Dr. K.M. Talgeri. This work was highly recommended by Professor Sacchidanand Murthy (former chairman of UGC), Professor S.L. Pandey (Allahabad University), and Professor B.L. Atreya (BHU). He also translated one of the volumes of Dr. S.N. Dasgupta's *A History of Indian Philosophy* into Hindi on invitation from the Rajasthan Hindi Granth Academy.

Professor Sharma has written several scholarly articles in the *Vedanta Kersari Philosophical Quarterly*, *Pathway to God*, and other journals. He has also guided many doctoral students. He was elected the Sectional President of the Indian Philosophical Congress in 1986, and he organized their conference at Jodhpur that same year. He was awarded the Pranavanand International Award for his contributions to philosophy in 1986.

In 1987, he received a grant from the University Grants Commission for research work on the philosophy of the saints of Marwar. A manuscript of this work is ready for publication. In 1984 Professor Sharma received grants from the Indian Philosophical Congress and the University Grants Commission to travel to the United States for a conference on Neo-Platonism and Gnosticism, including a lecture series at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania.

*SHRI SADGURU PRASANNA*

# *MYSTICISM AND CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY*

**M. L Sharma**

*To*

*My Spiritual Teacher*

Academy of Comparative Philosophy and Religion
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# Mysticism and Contemporary Philosophy

## PUBLISHER's NOTE

Academy of Comparative Philosophy and Religion, (ACPR) Belagavi is an international Institution founded in 1952 by Dr.R.D.Ranade, one of the leading Mystic saints of modern India. ACPR is a global platform for the call of "Awareness of Unity" given by this modern prophet. It is a global gallery echoing the eternity ever whispering the tune of our philosophical, spiritual, cultural and historical heritage. Besides the publication of its English Quarterly journal *'Pathway to God,'* ACPR publishes books on philosophy and spiritualism for spreading the message of peace and harmony among people across the world.

We are immensely happy that the year 2019 has been a year of bonanza of publications. The present book titled "Mysticism and Contemporary Philosophy" written by Prof. M.L. Sharma, is the fifth publication within a span of six months. As Shri Gurudev Ranade emphasised, 'The publication work is more durable than work in marble. Instead of raising buildings we should attend to publishing important works.' Accordingly, we have ventured into publishing this book.

As Professor Ranade said, "philosophers are not interested in Mysticism and Mystics are not interested in Philosophy. But if a mystic philosophises his experiences he can raise the thinking humanity into the Divine Kingdom of Ends." The present book holds a mirror to his statement. It is indeed a remarkable work which paves the way for the Divine Kingdom of Ends for the thinking community of the current age. We are extremely indebted to Prof.M.L.Sharma for bearing the entire cost of printing this book. We pray, May the spirit of Gurudev Ranade bestow upon him and his family peace, prosperity and continue to enlighten the spiritual path shown by him.

May all spiritual aspirants derive inspiration and enlightenment from reading this book.

Date: September 12, 2019
Place: Belagavi

**M.B. Zirali**
Hon. Secretary
ACPR, Belgavi

# Contents


Foreword ..... 1
Introduction ..... 3
What is Mysticism? ..... 9
Mysticism and Existentialism ..... 21
Mysticism and Phenomenology ..... 36
Msticism and Pragmatism ..... 45
Ranade's Mysticism ..... 58
Mysticism and Logic ..... 71
Moral and Religious Obligations ..... 80
Mysticism and Moral Philosophy of Plotinus ..... 86
Ranade's Conception of the Bhagavadgītā ..... 93
Vedānta - True and False ..... 107
Theism of Rāmānuja and Nimbārka ..... 112
Concept of Liberation in Gnosticism, Neoplatonism and the Gitā* ..... 131
Ranade's Approach to the Theory of Truth ..... 140
The Concept of Man and Destiny in Contemporary Philosophy ..... 146
Professor Date's New Light on the Vedānta of Śaṃkara ..... 154
Mysticism and Neo-Hegelianism ..... 163
Philosophy, Science and Values ..... 173
Index ..... 178

# *Foreword*

*"Rāmachandram Gurūm natvā mātaram cha Saraswatīm,*
*Sangamo dhyāyate sattāmvibhaktām sanātanīm* ||1||

*Ekamevādvitīyam sat sākshādevānubhūyate,*
*Yāchit mandananyāyattachcha sarvatra yujyate* ||2||

*Sarvadarshantātparyamadvaitānubhavastatah,*
*Sarvehshabdestathā Bhāvaih sudhibhistachcha lakshyate* ||3||"

All philosophy that is worth pursuing leads, directly or indirectly, to mysticism. Professor R.D. Ranade who combined discursive philosophy with saintly living of non-discursive experience of Being, taught us that all philosophers are mystics and all philosophy is mysticism. Analytically speaking, his view means that all systems of philosophy contain an element of mystical experience.

There is a realm of Being that attracts everybody, but no statement can be made about it. It cannot be an object of thought. It can, however, be shown. Moreover, it can be experienced and its experience is usually described as mystical. If there is better word to describe it, mystics will not hesitate to accept it, for they do not quarrel over names. Some people say that mystical experience is necessarily paradoxical. Others argue that it is metaphysical. A few thinkers maintain that it is basically dialectical and takes contradiction as the nature of being. Lastly there are Vedāntists who argue that it is the same as self-knowledge. But all of these philosophers agree that mystical experience reveals the being that is beyond the scope of sense-experience and inference. It is neither a sensory experience nor inferential knowledge. It is unthinkable but it is not a wind egg, as it is not an object of thought. As Vedāntists say it is mirrored in our thought but it is not an object of thought. Even a moment's reflection on it is fraught with immense pleasure and significance. It is the bedrock of all religions and provides a basis upon which all religions can be united and all systems of metaphysics and moral can be synthesized.

Furthermore, there is a consensus among mystics that whatever is perceived or inferred is not real in the primary sense of the term 'reality.' Its being or reality is borrowed from mystical experience which alone bestows reality on an object of perception or inference. The way of this bestowal is called *Yāchita maṇḍaṇa nyāya.* It means that reality of an object of thought is borrowed from Being which is experienced in mystical experience, just as the light that we find in our eyes, lamps, moon etc. is borrowed from the light of the Sun. Mystical experience is the only way of knowing Being. There is no other way of knowing it.

Meanwhile teaching the basic tenets of mysticism Prof. Ranade led the life of a mystic and tried to articulate his experience a la the continuous tradition of the saints of medieval India. His disciples are continuing his tradition at different places. One such place is Jodhpur in Rajasthan where his disciple Prof. V.H. Date taught philosophy and showed the people the life of devotion leading to self-knowledge. Prof. M.L. Sharma, retired Head of Philosophy Department at Jodhpur University is an initiated disciple of Prof. Ranade and a direct student of Prof. Date. He has developed the thought of Prof. Ranade and Prof. Date against the background of Idealism, Pragmatism, Existentialism and Phenomenology and argued that these systems of philosophy help us understand some aspects of mysticism, although mysticism goes beyond them and it is difficult to understand it completely.

I thank Prof. Sharma for asking me to write a Foreword to his work, "Mysticism and Contemporary Philosophy". He has given me an opportunity to revisit the Bani of Prof. Ranade and reflect on it. Every reader, I hope, will share my experience that the book makes him blessed and enlightened. What more can be expected from a book of this kind?

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# *Introduction*

In the ensuing pages an attempt has been made to explain the nature of Mysticism, and to examine critically some of the outstanding philosophies that have flourished in recent past and in contemporary era. I have taken up philosophies of Neo-Hegelianism, Pragmatism, Phenomenology and Existentialism, and discussed each of them with a view to find out the mystical elements inherent in them. It has been invariably found that each philosophical system has landed itself in contradictions because of the failure of its proponents to pursue the full potential of the mystical elements contained in it. The reason for this failure is not far to seek. Philosophers as a rule have limited themselves to intellectual speculation about Reality or Being. It can only consider Being as an object, as something "other". It is only when the faculty of intuition enters the scene that Being or Reality ceases to be an object or the "other". Being or Reality then becomes a matter of direct, immediate, first-hand experience, a matter of realization. Mere sense perception and intellect cannot succeed in revealing the intimate nature of Being. "That from which our speech turns back along with the mind, being unable to comprehend its fullness, is the ultimate Reality (*Yato Vāćo Nivartante Aprāpya Manasā Saha)*", says the *Taitiriya Upaniṣad* (II.4). The *Kenopaniṣad* also teels us in the same strain – "That where the eye is unable to go, where neither speech nor mind is able to reach – what conception can we have of it, and beyond all that is unknown." (II. 3.)

The faculty of Intuition is found in all men, but it requires to be awakened through proper initiation and practice. Philosophers by and large, remain confident about the fullness of Being or Reality, and embark in the quest. They court, thereby, only failure. All the same the proponents of above philosophical systems could perceive as through a glass darkly the Being or Reality. So, some intimation of mystical elements can be discovered in their systems. For instance, F.H. Bradley's concept of Reality as Absolute Experience that is super-relational and supra logical is

the nearest approach to Mysticsim. Similarly, the Existentialism of Soren Kierkegaard and that of Karl Jaspers also contain mystical elements. Kierkegaard's attempt to match the rationalism of Hegel with his own brand of irrationalism in order to expose the presumptuousness of reason in the face of the mysteries of human existence results in relating the authentic self, which is self-transcending in nature, to a transcendent God through an act of faith. Karl Jaspers too held that the self in its liberty makes a forward movement and comes across 'limiting situations" (such as failures, frustrations and death) which make him aware of his groundedness in the Transcendent or God who exists as the all-encompassing ground of both the objective world of " being-there" and the subjective world of "being-oneself". The existence of the Transcendent can neither be proved nor disproved logically because it is not an object that can be grasped by the categories of reason. However, the human self in its act of transcending itself can encounter the transcendent. Though the self in its liberty can advance in undetermined directions (it can, for instance, advance towards atheism of Nietzsche), yet by holding fast his "philosophic faith" it advances towards the transcendent. For an individual endowed with philosophic faith and every event of the world serves as a sign of the existence of God or the Transcendent.

We thus find mystical strains of thought in Kierkegaard's concept of the self-transcendent God through an act of unquestioning faith exemplified in Abraham of Old Testament, and Karl Jaspers' concept of a free forward-moving human self becoming aware of the Transcendent or God by an act of "philosophic faith".

Edmund Husserl in his Phenomenology employs the concept of Epoche in his search for a priori, absolute and transcendental structure of human consciousness. This reminds us of the state of 'Maun' or silence in which the mystic silently enjoys the blissful experience of God-realization. But Husserl stops short of relating finite human consciousness to the infinite divine consciousness. Instead he rediscovers objectivity at the root of subjectivity or Ego that is seen to be inextricably related to an organic body. This ego

as a psychophysical entity has an intuition of the existence of other similar Egos coexisting in the world. All Egos share in a community of action, language and ideas etc. that refer to an objective, spatio-temporal world. The Nemesis of phenomenological Epoché is complete. Husserl's search for a priori, absolute and transcendental structures of human consciousness meets with an anti-climax in the reestablishment of the naïve realistic world of space and time populated by a multitude of psycho-physical Egos interacting among themselves through community of action, language and ideas. Husserl's thought thus comes to a full circle. Leaving naïve realism behind, it enters into transcendental idealism, and again returns to naïve realism masquerading as phenomenological objective.

Bertrand Russell in his classic essay "Mysticism and Logic" has acknowledged the value of Mysticism as an inalienable factor that accounts for greatness in Philosophy. In his opinion Metaphysics as an attempt to conceive the world as a whole by means of thought becomes possible by the union and conflict of two very different human impulses, the one urging men towards Mysticism, the other urging them towards Science. He goes on to declare that "the greatest men who have become philosophers have felt need both of science and Mysticism". He refers to the philosophies of Heraclitus and Plato in which mystical as well as scientific tendencies are co-mingled making them "great feats of human thought".

However, Russell all the while assumes that mysticism with its faculty of Intuition, and science with its faculty Reason are opposed to each other. Throughout his essay he builds up opposition between mysticism and science. The trouble is that he identifies mysticism with an intense feeling or mood. On the other hand, he considers science to be cognitive in nature, representing it as perceptual knowledge and discursive reason. But mysticism is not feeling or emotion. It represents primarily an intuitive insight that is cognitive in nature. Russell's presumption that intuition and intellect are opposed to each other is not valid. In fact, intellect and intuition are partners in the enterprise of knowledge. Even in science, great achievements are possible only

with cooperation of intuition and intellect. All fruitful scientific hypotheses are the works of the intuitive insights of great scientists, and it is the years of intellectual preparation on the part of those scientists that made possible those intuitive insights. Thus, Mysticism that stands for intuitive insight, and Logic which is affiliated to discursive intellect, reciprocally assist each other in man's search for Reality or Being.

Though the present work is primarily devoted to critical study of the systems of contemporary western philosophy on the background of Mysticism, it also deals critically with prominent systems of Indian theism viz., the *Viśistādvaita* of Rāmānujācārya, of Nimbārkācārya and *Śuddhādvaita* of Vallabhācārya. The *Dvaitavāda* of Madhvācārya being frankly dualistic in character is a far cry from Mysticism which is consistent with non-dualism alone. But even in the case of Madhva, the feeling of absolute dependence of devotee on God that finds expression in the heartfelt prayer '***Yāće aham karuṇāsindho*** ....' the mystical tendency of ultimate unification of devotee with God is more than evident. As distinguished from the dualism of Madhva, Śaṃkaracārya propounds *Advaitavāda* which is mystical to the core. Inasmuch as Śaṃkaracārya attends to all sides of human experience, remarks Professor Date[1], he is simultaneously a realist and an idealist, a theist and a mystic. He assumes himself to be realist when he meets a subjective idealist or a nihilist, an idealist when he meets with a realist, a theist when he meets with a *Sāṃkhya* atheist, and a mystic when he meets a theist. His idealism and mysticism at once subsume and transcend realism and theism. This is because his metaphysics of non-dualism is simply an intellectual construction of his own mystical realization of *Brahman*. In contrast, the metaphysical theories of four Vaiṣṇavavite Ācāryas are riddled with contradictions because they failed to develop the full potential of the mystical tendencies inherent in concepts of '*prapatti*' of Rāmānujācārya and Nimbārka, '*Puṣṭi-Bhakti*' of Vallabhācārya and '*Śaraṇāgati*' of Madhvācārya.

Rāmānuja propounded the metaphysics of Qualified Non-dualism wherein Souls (ćit) and Matter (ać it) are said to be

attributes of the Substance Brahman. He subordinates multiplicity to unity. Nimbārka and Vallabha followed in main the lead given by Rāmānuja. Nimbārka regarded ćit and aćit as energies (śakti) of Brahman. For him multiplicity was at par with unity. Like Śaṃkara, Vallabha asserted that Brahman is a pure unity, but unlike the former he held that Brahman gives rise to real multiplicity by dint of his marvelous powers (*aiśvarya*). Madhva's dualism (*Dvaitavāda*) lays great stress on the reality of multiplicity characterized by five-fold difference between *aćit-aćit*, *aćit-ćit*, *aćit-Īśvara*, *ćit-ćit* and *ćit- Īśvara* i.e, *jada-jada*, *jada-jīva*, *jada- Īśvara*, *jīva- jīva*, and *jīva- Īśvara*. However, Madhva's doctrine of independent reals in the form of God, Souls and Matter considers God personified as *Viṣṇu* alone as eternal, perfect and self -dependent (*svatantra*), and Souls and Matter as dependent (*paratantra*) on God (*Viṣṇu*). Souls (*jīvas*) attain liberation (*mokṣa*) by faith in and devotion towards Viṣṇu. Liberation consists in attaining inhabitance in *Viṣṇuloka* (*salokatā*). Concepts of abheda (non-difference) and bheda (difference) constitute the centers of the metaphysical systems of five Ācāryas of Vedānta. Śaṃkara regards non-difference (abheda) as ultimately real. Rāmānuja considers non-difference qualified by difference as real. Nimbārka vouchsafes for equal reality of non-difference and difference. Vallabha swears by pure non-difference untouched by *Māyā*, and Madhva proclaims that 'difference' alone is ultimately real.

Besides dealing with major Western and Indian philosophical systems from view-point of Mysticism, some essays in the present volume discuss important problems of moral and religious obligation, relation of science, philosophy and values, Liberation in Gnosticism, Neo-Platonism and the *Bhavadgitā* and nature of Truth. However, Mysticism forms the center around which the different systems and problems revolve. Thus, a common thread runs through all the essays.

In the end, I am glad to record my feelings of gratitude to Professor S.L. Pande for writing foreword to the present volume. Professor Pande is an erstwhile student of Professor R.D. Ranade at Allahbad University, Allahbad. He has established himself as

an eminent Indian Philosopher. This volume could see the light of the day only in the new millennium long after Professor Pande wrote the foreword, because of certain unforeseen circumstances. I feel certain that the Divine Will has chosen to encourage the very institution my great Spiritual Teacher, Gurudev Ranade started, the Academy of Contemporary Philisophy and Religion (ACPR), to publish this volume, and at the right moment.

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# *What is Mysticism?*

There is a great deal of misinformation and misunderstanding about the meaning, philosophical credentials, function and value of Mysticism among intellectuals and philosophers. This sorry state of affairs may be attributed to ignorance, superficial information or prejudice born of rationalistic conceit. The very mention of the subject of Mysticism arouses strange and bizarre ideas and images of the occult, the mysterious and the unintelligible in the minds of the so-called rationalists. There is a lurking feeling of identity between Mysticism and mystery. But even a cursory peep into the spiritual literature would suffice to convince anyone that there is as much resemblance between the two as it exists between the constellation 'Dog' and the animal known by that name. In other words, Mysticism and mystery have nothing in common except the alphabets that constitute them. Mysticism, on the contrary, banishes every element of mystery that surrounds Reality or God inasmuch as it involves a direct, immediate and intuitive contact with that Reality. Furthermore, the knower of Reality becomes one with that Reality. As the *Advaita Vedānta* puts it, the knower of Brahman himself becomes the Brahman (*Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavati.*)

In this context, it would be pertinent to recall the views of the great German philosopher Rudolf Otto, as propounded by him in his work, *The Idea of the Holy*, a book which has been widely regarded as a landmark in the field of the Philosophy of Religion. Otto designates the object of spiritual experience as the *Numinous* in order to emphasize its objectivity. He points out that the unique and incomparable element in the experience of solemn worship is the 'creature-consciousness' or creature-feeling. 'It is the emotion of a creature, submerged and overwhelmed by its own nothingness in contrast to that which is supreme above all creatures'. Otto recalls the psychical condition of Abraham, when, finding himself face to face with God, ventures to plead with Him for the men of Sodome (Gen. XVIII.27), in order to illustrate the nature of 'creature feeling'. But Otto goes on to say that "the 'creature feeling' is itself a first subjective concomitant and effect of another

feeling-element, which casts it like a shadow, but which in itself indubitably has immediate and primary reference to an object outside the self." This object is called the *Numinous*. Its nature is analysed by Otto in terms of the feelings it arouses in the subject of experience and concludes that it can only be appropriately expressed as '*Mysterium Tremendum*'.

What we have to point out here is that when Otto describes the object of spiritual experience as '*mysterium*' and adds the adjective '*tremendum*' to it, he means to say that numinous Reality is 'wholly other', super-rational, supra-mundane, filling the mind with blank wonder and astonishment. He makes it amply clear that '*mysterium*' is not to be understood in its natural sense so as to mean merely a secret or a mystery which is uncomprehended and unexplained. It is to be taken in the religious sense of something transcendent that fills us with absolute amazement. It is so wonderful that it fascinates us beyond words. Now the adjective '*tremendum*' conveys awfulness, majesty and energy of the numinous which is daunting and fascinating, something that captivates and transports us with a strange ravishment, rising often enough to the pitch of dizzy intoxication'.[1]

Thus, far from being occult and unintelligible, Mysticism is doubtless the most meaningful, intelligible and sublimest pursuit, man is capable of. Plato the great Greek philosopher, regarded Mysticism as the noblest occupation possible for a philosopher. In his 7th Epistle, he wistfully says: 'There is no writing of mine on this subject, nor ever shall be. It is not capable of expression like other branches of study... .If I thought these things could be adequately written down and stated to the world, what finer occupation could I have had in life than to write what would be of great service to mankind."[2]

As Plato admits, Mysticism deals with experiences of an extraordinary nature because they pertain to human encounter with the Divine. The mystic finds that the conceptual schemata which are adequate to give expression to the mundane experience are seen to be hopelessly inadequate to describe the mystic experience. As such, he may decide to be a mute witness to his

unique experience which is sufficient for his own elevation to Divinity. But if he ventures to philosophize, he has to improvise some new conceptual scheme or else he redefines the old concepts so as to convey his supra-rational experiences for the benefit of mankind. As Ranade puts it, "If a mystic philosophizes, he may raise the thinking humanity into a Divine Kingdom of Ends." [3]

Coming now to the meaning of Mysticism, we can do no better than to quote the succinct definition of Mysticism as given by Ranade in the Preface of his great book, "Mysticism in Maharashtra" : "Mysticism denotes that attitude of mind which involves a direct, immediate, first-hand, intuitive apprehension of God." It signifies the "highest attitude of which a man is capable, namely, a restful and loving contemplation of God."[4] This direct and cataclysmic contact of the mystic with the Reality is made possible by the power of Intuition. Intellect, Feeling and Will and senses must be penetrated and backed by Intuition before they enable one to experience God. Though the faculty of Intuition is potentially present in all human beings, it can be aroused by proper initiation and practice alone. A powerful God-realiser alone is competent to initiate the seeker and instruct him in spiritual discipline which can awaken his intuitive faculty. Once the faculty of intuition is activated, the blind can see all, the deaf is able to hear all and a lame man is able to go in pursuit. Thus, mystical experience is supersensuous in nature in the sense that it can be had without the aid of the senses in case of a person whose intuitive faculty has become active by the grace of some realised Master.

Ranade has suggested that the supersensuous nature of mystical experiences can be explained in terms of 'central initiation' from the point of view of physiology. Physiologically, the sensuous experience is explained in terms of 'peripheral initiation', because the stimulation received by the senses is carried by the peripheral nerves to the appropriate centers in the brain where the sensation is aroused. But the supersensuous sound, smell, vision etc. that are experienced by the mystic do not come from outside by the way of peripheral stimulation. They are initiated from the brain or are 'centrally initiated'. This is how the physiological counterpart of

the supersensuousness of mystical experience is convincingly brought out by Ranade.

The philosophical credentials of mysticism are also founded on rational grounds as securely as can be expected of any philosophical system. When we analyze mystical experience into its salient elements viz., the intellectual, the emotional, and the moral and also keep in view its character of universality, it would become amply clear that Mystical experience can be tested as regards its genuineness or otherwise with reference to certain criteria. First and foremost, there is a certain amount of universality in cumulative experience of the mystics of the East and the West. All mystics teach about the value of Name of God and meditation on it as the sure means of God-realization. They proclaim in one voice that they have intimations of the Divine in the form of supersensuous visions, lights, sounds, touch and smells. Most of them have had to pass through the agonies of what is called as the Dark Night of the Soul before attaining the beatific union with the Divine. Castigating the sacraments and ritualistic performances, all mystics insist on cultivating the Fire of Devotion as the sole means of propitiating God. Again, mystics have described Self-Realization as consisting in the vision of the Self in identical terms. They are also unanimous in saying that their experience of seeing God face to face ultimately culminates in the establishment of the identity of Self and God. As the great Neo-Platonic philosopher Plotinus puts it, "If then a man sees himself, become one with the One, he has in himself a likeness of the One, and if he passes out of himself as an image to its arche type, he has reached the end of his journey. This may be called the flight of the alone to the Alone."[5] This element of universality in the experiences and teachings of the world mystics also extends to their description of the Ideal Saint as having conquered grief, infatuation and fear due to his lodgement in God, and of the Royal Procession in which the vision of God appears before the devotee at the end of a series of visions of the lesser realities just as some King appears at the end of a trail of his vassals of lesser dignity. Thus, mystics who are poles apart from the point of view of time, space, language, religion and culture give a universal message for turning the suffering and ignorant humanity Godward. It is this

universality of the teachings and experiences of the mystics that confers on them objectivity and validity.

Mystic experience involves the full exercise of Intellect, Feeling and Will. As such, its philosophic credibility has to be judged by the three-fold criterion of intellectual clarity, finest emotional refinement, and virtue-oriented volition. Firstly, any mystic experience worth the name should be capable of clarifying our thought. This quality can emerge only when the mystic possesses a penetrating and unfaltering intellect. A person who is subject to hallucinations, delusions and other abnormal conditions and whose intellect is clouded by confusions can never make a legitimate claim to genuine mystic experience. A mystic has a keen intellect which enables him to discriminate between mystic experiences and illusions.

A mystic experience not only gives him an insight into the nature and working of God, but also enables him to offer intellectual constructions which compel philosophic admiration. It is not without reason that Saṃkarāćārya and Plotinus, Augustine and Spinoza, St. Paul and Jñanesvara, Prof. Ranade and Sri Aurobindo have left behind them works which touch the highest watermark of intellect.

Secondly, mystic experience cannot be had without refinement of emotions. The mystic has to channelise all his emotions towards God so that they become 'deiformed' and enable the mystic to pine for the vision of God with one-pointed devotion. St. Ramdasa in his 'Verses Addressed to the Mind' implores his mind to make *Vāsudeva* or God as the constant habitat of all his emotions and desires.[6] In short, the life of the mystic is marked by the plenitude of finer emotions. However, all his emotions are controlled by the intellect. Ranade recalls Spinoza's concept of the Amor Intelletualis Dei and says that what is needed in true life of Mysticism is that "emotions must be transcended in an intellectual love of God."[7]

Thirdly, mystic experience should be able to contribute to definite moral improvement of the devotee so that he develops the

zeal to render service to the society. God is the sole repository of the supreme value of Truth, Goodness and Beauty (*Satyam, Sivam, Sundaram*). Just as the iron ball put in the fire itself become fiery, so does the devotee acquire divine qualities by his participation in the nature of God through his mystic experience. Plotinus says, "The vision is not to be regarded as unfruitful. In this state the perfect soul begets, like God Himself, beautiful thoughts and beautiful virtues."[8] By his constant contemplation of God, the mystic acquires great power and energy for doing good to the world. He is blessed with a preponderance of loving affections which spontaneously move him to render the highest service to humanity. Being brimful with love and compassion, mystics have from moment to moment drawn the attention of humanity to the greatness and glory of God so that they are stimulated to achieve their own salvation which is synonymous with God-realization. Jesus Christ, St. Paul, Śamkarāćārya, and St. Rāmadāsa who were the living embodiments of highest moral virtues lived and died in the service of humanity because they participated incessantly in the nature of God. Moral greatness is the hallmark of any mystic worth the name.

Mysticism is, therefore, not found wanting in its philosophical credibility. Besides the criteria of mystic experience discussed above, there are a few more touchstones by reference to which its validity and reliability can be judged. Among them the recurrence and growth are important. A mystic experience which occurs only once and never returns is likely to be of a doubtful nature. But if it recurs over and over again day after day, its genuineness is established thereby. Again, there should be a growth in mystic experience from day to day and year to year so that the mystic might gradually approximate to the divine Reality. Reality being infinite, even the most advanced mystic can not hope to realize it completely. The greatest of the Mahārāshtra mystics St. Jñānesvara tells us that there is always that difference between God and the perfect mystic as that which exists between the full Moon and the Moon of the fourteenth day. He further says that even Lord Śaṃkara is as yet only a wayfarer on the infinite Pathway to God.

Mysticism has been called the Pathway to God by Prof. R.D. Ranade. This expression at once brings out in bold relief the function and value of Mysticism. The chief function of Mysticism is to direct man's attention to the higher spiritual world which envelops this visible material world and gives it sustenance and value. He is made aware of the fact that he is more than physical-vital-psychic automaton responding to the series of stimuli coming from the material environment and leading a precarious life of constant adjustment with the hostile surroundings till he meets his end in a meaningless fiasco. Mystics arouse him from his materialistic slumber, draw his attention to his boundless spiritual potentialities and inspire him to realize his divine destiny both by precept and example, because being full of love and compassion, they cannot stand the sight of human beings suffering under the weight of misery born of their ignorance about their higher destiny.

In this context, it would not be out of place to point out that the life of Mysticism is not haphazard and disorderly as may be supposed by the uninitiated. A great philosopher-mystic himself, Ranade has by his study of world mystics systematically portrayed the mystical life as it originates and grows through definite stages and culminates in the experience of the Reality in the form of mystic's own Self. St. Jñānesvara, while describing his supernal experience, says that just as two clear mirrors when placed against each other reflect each other infinitely, so do God and the Self reflect each other infinitely with the result that all difference between them is obliterated.

As to the origin of mystical life, it would be interesting to consider the various incentives which prompt us to a life in God. Suffering and the experience of helplessness in life are indeed very powerful though common incentives which may create in many of us an urge to turn towards the Pathway to God. But besides such psychological incentives as suffering and frustration in life, there are philosophical and moral incentives also which lead a thinking person towards spiritual life. Philosophically, some of us do have intimations that before we were born in this world here we were denizens of the Divine world, and as

Wordsworth says, "trailing clouds of glory do we come from God who is our home." These intimations not only serve as reminders of our divine heritage but also inspire us to follow the Pathway that may lead us back to our original habitat. Again, we may reflect as to rare opportunity that has been offered to us in the form of our present birth as human beings and gird up our loins to follow the spiritual ideal so that our whole life may be merged in contemplation and prayer to God. The moral incentives are concerned with our attempts to free ourselves from the thraldom of senses on the one hand and the sense of sin on the other. Succumbing to the temptations of the senses would result in our destruction. What then is the remedy that may enable us to overcome temptations? The only sovereign remedy is to pray to God incessantly to lead us safely across tempestuous river of sensuality. A life of sins also may serve as a powerful incentive to spiritual life in case of at least some fortunate persons. St. Nāmadeva, for instance, was a highway marauder but a sudden conversion enabled him to turn to life dedicated to the realization of God. A similar conversion occurred in the case of St. Paul, the second founder of Christianity. In short, illusions, anxiety, evanescence and momentariness, helplessness in the face of an inscrutable fate which are the built-in features of the worldly life may severally and jointly serve as incentives to mystical life.

However, before we can successfully embark upon the mystical journey, we have to make intellectual and moral preparation for it. Intellectually, we should be convinced about the supremacy of the Spirit over the body, of God as the alpha and the omega of all existence, and of the ephemerality of the sensual life on the one hand and abiding character on the other. Morally, we should cultivate the central virtue of God-devotion which is the fountain-head of all other ethical virtues like self-control, equanimity, truthfulness, compassion, desirelessness, and altruism. Apart from these virtues we should seek the company of the good and the holy and avoid the contact with ungodly and sinful. Morality is not only the essential pre-requisite of spiritual life but is necessary for our stability and growth in that life. If morality is the backbone of spiritual life, progress in spiritual life in its turn

deepens and strengthens morality. In short, morality and Mysticism strengthen each other reciprocally.

After initial intellectual and moral preparation for the mystical life, we have to sit at the feet of some powerful spiritual Master who has himself realized God and can make others also realize Him. The Guru or the Spiritual Teacher alone can initiate the disciple into spiritual life by imparting the Name of God to him. The Name of God being potent, meditation on it reveals the Form of God to the disciple. But this consummation is attained after an arduous journey interspersed with a number of pitfalls and dangers which darken the pathway. The Spiritual Teacher and other saints serve as beacon-lights to the aspirant proceeding courageously on the tortuous path through turmoil and travail.

The Spiritual Teacher occupies a very important place in the mystical life of the disciple for whom he is nothing less than God in human form. He pours the celestial Word in the ears of the disciple, teaches him the proper methodology of meditation, mercifully protects him from dangers, makes him forget his body consciousness, reveals the light of God to him, and confers liberation on him by uniting him with God by His grace.

During his pilgrimage to the divine Reality, the aspirant experiences God in the form of supersensuous light, colours, sounds, smells, touch and locomotion. These supersensous experiences become possible because the aspirant engages himself in the meditation on the Name imparted by the Spiritual Teacher without wasting a single moment with concentration and utmost devotion. They carry the devotee to higher and higher level of experience, and the way is opened ultimately for his union with God. But before the consummation is reached, the devotee has to pass through the phenomenon called Dark Night of the soul in the form of disappointments, frustrations and insuperable difficulties which darken his pathway. However, the darkest hour is the harbinger of the dawn, and soon the Everlasting Nay opens the way for the Everlasting Yea. If the devotee is tender-minded, he pitifully prays and implores God not to forsake him, and begs for His gracious vision without which he will die like a fish out of

water. But if he is tough-minded he shows his determination to pursue the path of God even in the face of all odds till He grants him His blissful vision. But despite these temperamental differences, all aspirants cherish union with God as the *summum bonum* of their life and press towards that goal with one-pointed devotion.

The devotee's pilgrimage takes him to the highest ascent of experience which consists in the vision of the Form of the Self. The sage of the *Maitri Upanishad* describes this supernal experience when he says that at the acme of realization the Self immanent in the devotee rises from the body of that devotee, meets with the supreme Reality and appears before him in a flood of light in his own Form. Similarly, Kabira says that while he meditated concentratedly, a brilliant flame of light appeared before him and within that flame he saw the primeval Person who being the support of all is himself supportless. This vision of the divine Reality in the form of the devotee's own Self is indeed the same as the experience of the mystical union of the devotee with God. It marks the culmination of all spiritual endeavour on the part of the devotee.

The realization of God makes the mystic blissful and tranquil. Because he has drunk deep at the fountain of divine ambrosia, he not only ceases to entertain desires for the objects of the sense but even the craving for those objects is conquered by him as a result of his vision of the supreme Reality. When he has become one with the non-dual infinite Reality, how can any fear, anger, infatuation, lust, hatred or jealousy arise in him in the absence of all duality? As the *Upanishad* puts it, how can sorrow and infatuation remain in the mystic who has lodged himself in the unitary *Brahman*?

In addition to above beatificatory and moral effects of the realization of God, R.D. Ranade has mentioned the liberative, cosmical and intoxicative effects. "Having set aside the barriers of caste and creed, and having put an end to the rounds of birth and death, the saint attains identity with the God-head, and becomes a benefactor of humanity." Kabir also says that " he

becomes immortal; he will never die."[9] As the *Vedānta* of Śaṃkara holds, the *Brahma-jñani* lives and moves in this world as Jivan-Mukta i.e., as one who has attained liberation even while he is living in his body. Sage Bādarāyana in his "*Brahma-Sutra*" says that according to *Śruti* there is no return to mortal life for one who has attained the knowledge of the *Brahman* (*Anāvrittih śabdāt* IV.4.22). As to the cosmical effects of God-realization, the most suitable illustration that comes to our mind is from the *Bhagavadgītā* where it is said that one who is dwelling in God sees his Self in every object and all objects in his Self.[10] The Self of the Mystic becomes identical with all existences, cosmic, psychic and epistemological. As the Sage of *Taittiriya Upaniṣad* sings: " I am the food....., I am the food-eater....., I am the maker of their Unity." Thus, the Self of the God-realiser is experienced as so vast that it envelops everything with the result that all kinds of differences are transcended in the homogeneous unity of the Self. This unitive experience produces a unique state of joy bordering on ecstasy which has been called as the state of intoxication or of divine lunacy. Kabir has said that his Self drank drought after drought of spiritual wine without measure so that he had no desire left except to maintain complete Epoche and to enjoy silently the raptures of God-possession.

The delineation of Mysticism in all its aspects as presented above would be enough to convince any sympathetic but discerning reader that Mysticism far from being something occult, mysterious and bizarre represents a view of life and world which no science can impeach and to which all philosophy may aspire in order to become epistemologically, metaphysically and axiologically satisfying. Above all, Mysticism alone can serve as the meeting ground for all the contending theologians who only quarrel because they cannot converge.

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# *Mysticism and Existentialism*

Mysticism is rooted in the existential predicament of man. As the thinking man passes through the life, he faces disconcerting difficulties and challenges both from external and internal sources. These challenges again occur within a lifespan that can be cut short by death at any moment. Man realizes that circumscribed as his life is by birth and death, it is also subject to an inscrutable fate. His experience often brings home to him the fact that, not infrequently, what he himself proposes, fate disposes. Helplessness in life's experiences seems to loom large before him. He feels that external forces of nature and society create circumstances in the face of which many of his cherished pursuits and goals prove illusory. Man, also gradually comes face to face with the truth that there are forces residing within him that also are potent causes of his undoing. There is the sleep of ignorance that makes him forgetful of the true meaning of value of human life. He proceeds through life in a state of complacency and is robbed by his own passions of lust, pride, avarice, anger etc. If he is wakeful to the onslaughts of these internal robbers, he is constantly in warfare with himself because his lower nature of passions and his higher nature of reason pull him in opposite directions. Then there are the sufferings and infirmities of illness and old age to which the human flesh is the natural heir. Add to this sorry state of affairs the irresistible and all-destructive stroke of death and the picture of man's existential predicament is complete in all its stark luridness.

Existentialism also takes a serious note of the existential predicament of man. Sartre, Jaspers, Camus and Marcel all agree with Heidegger in lamenting that man is 'thrown' in the world of Being, one knows not from where. Man, truly exists or stands out from the background of Nature. He as the being-for-itself is pitted against the world as being-in-itself. Being self-conscious he is free and self-creative and self-transcending. But he has to proceed through life without any hope of succor from the opaque Being-in-itself. Thus, the existentialist philosophers find the existing

individual in a strange predicament as regards ethical choice because he has nothing to fall back upon for his guidance. Nature as described by science is a dance of blind particles totally indifferent to the moral aspirations of man. Society is divided against itself. The bewildered individual can hardly avoid being either submerged in its customs and traditions or reduced to a function of some group. The Nation-State clamors for unconditional obedience of the individual with all its totalitarian might before which individual freedom is the first casualty. God is indeed dead and the individual can no longer look to traditional religion for ethical enlightenment. Thus, the individual is left to himself for the resolution of his ethical predicament. But the individual is a riddle to himself in view of the discovery of psychologists and psychoanalysts that he is ordinarily unaware of the unconscious motives that determine his behaviour. This is how Existentialism paints the existential predicament of contemporary individual.

Both Mysticism and Existentialism are preeminently philosophies which have a very close relation to life in the sense that they arise from the problems of existence faced by man and offer messages of salvation to him so that he can live by meaningfully. Moreover, both these philosophies can be said to be intensely personalistic in character inasmuch as they are rooted in the personal experiences of philosophers as they struggle with life's momentous problems. Again, both Existentialism and Mysticism are subjectivistic in the sense that they insist that truth is not truth unless it is freely appropriated by the individual, in his innermost subjectivity. Truth which is merely objective has hardly any significance for the individual who requires a truth which is passionately acquired by him so that he feels committed to it. It is in this sense that the Danish philosopher Kierkegaard, who has been acknowledged as the father of Existentialism, holds that truth is subjectivity. In his personal life he passed through certain well-marked stages characterized progressively by cynical enjoyment of momentary sensual pleasures, then by acceptance of impersonal universal moral principle and lastly by a surrender to the infinite, transcendent, personal God in complete Faith. He universalized this spiritual itinerary of his personal life and

presented his well -known doctrine that individual in search of authentic existence has to pass through the Aesthetic, the Ethical and Religious stages respectively for the fullest development of his existential subjectivity. His existential philosophy is thus a formalisation in the universal terms of his personal encounter with Truth. Mysticism also involves a direct, first-hand, intuitive contact with God on the part of the mystic. The mystic does not arrive at the existence of the God through the so-called proofs given by the discursive reason. He perceives God intuitively and so the truth of divinity is appropriated by him as his own truth. Of course, there is difference between Kierkegaard's leap of Faith towards infinite personal God visualized as an objective uncertainty and mystic's immediate contact with God who is experienced as neither personal nor impersonal but as transpersonal. But, as for the nature of truth as subjectivity, there is hardly any difference of opinion between Kierkegaard and any mystic.

Existentialists insist on the primacy of the subject. The shadow of Descartes who made the self-certainty of the self or the subject as the cornerstone of his philosophy has obviously fallen on the entire course of Modern Western Philosophy. The insistence of the Existentialists on the subject-oriented reflection also shows that they have been influenced by Descartes. But there is a fundamental difference between the Cartesian and the existentialist concepts of self. The self of Descartes is an epistemological subject existing in isolation from the world, while the subject as conceived by existentialists is self-in-the-world, the concrete self, existing in relation to other selves and the material world. The existentialists do not regard the subject as merely intellectual in nature. For them the subject is essentially free to choose from among the alternatives presented before him so that he constantly transcends himself by repeatedly renewing his choice. The facticity of his empirical self as constituted by his body, mental dispositions and social situation is for him the being-there (Dasien), which he tries to transcend in order to appropriate the being-oneself. So the existentialist concept of the self is markedly different from the Cartesian concept.

Mysticism also regards the subject or the self as being of primary importance. But its notion of the self is at variance with the existentialist notion. According to Mysticism, the self is to be distinguished from body, senses, mind, intellect and ego-sense, which are all encompassed under the object-world. It is the Atman or the pure subject that can never be known as an object that is to be discovered by the mystic by a careful and persistent elimination of every trace of objectivity. All mystical discipline is yoked to the search of the pure self, and when it is realized it is seen to be identical with the Reality or the Brahman.

After noting some significant meeting- points of Mysticism and Existentialism, we may now consider the comparative value of these philosophies in the context of the moral and spiritual crisis faced by mankind. Existentialism of atheistic type has been advocated by Heidegger, Sartre and Camus. According to Sartre, man has been thrown in a world that is devoid of God. If there is no God, then the belief in a universal moral law also cannot be sustained. Man, whose essence consists of the *pour-soi* or consciousness is not only pitted against the *en-soi* or being-in-itself, but he can exist only in separation from something or some form of *en-soi*. While the *en-soi* is full of being, the *pour-soi* is essentially the lack of being, the emptiness or nothingness. Man, therefore, is simply an inexplicable entity, which can at best be conceived as fissure or hole in the en-soi. In contrast to the *en-soi*, which is necessary being, man is merely *de trop* or contingent being. Man, as the *pour-soi*, is dependent for his being on the *en-soi* because he needs it as a constant presence in separation from which he exists. His fundamental project is to go in pursuit of *en-soi* in some form or the other and then to unite himself with the being inherent in it so that his native non-being or emptiness could be eliminated by the appropriation of being. But this fundamental project of the unity of *pour-soi* and *en-soi*, which could become the ground of man's self-subsistence, is doomed to failure because it is inherently contradictory. The *pour-soi* being of the nature of nothingness is at the opposite pole from the *en-soi* or being. Hence, their union is inherently impossible.

Now Sartre's denial of God is more radical and aggressive than that of the traditional atheists. He is not content like Neitzsche with announcement that God is now dead in the sense that whatever relevance belief in God had for the primitive man who lived in constant fear of the formidable forces of nature, it has now become irrelevant for the contemporary man who has mastered the forces of nature with the help of science. He strikes at the very root of the idea of God by ingeniously proving that it is a self-contradictory idea. His argument is that God is conceived as the Infinite Conscious Being, and as consciousness and being are contradictory terms, their unity is as impossible as that of roundness and squareness. Therefore, the concept of God is of the same category as the concept of round square.

But it is of interest to note that though Sartre denies the existence of God or for that matter he even asserts the logical impossibility of the concept of God, yet he says that the fundamental project of man is to become God. From the very nature of the case, such a project can never be fulfilled. As he puts it, "Each human presence in the world is at the same time the direct project of metamorphosing his own *Pour-soi* into *En-soi- Pour-soi*... Thus, man's passion is the inverse of Christ's, "for man loses himself as man in order that God may be born. But the idea of God is contradictory and we lose ourselves in vain; man is a useless passion."[1] It is wonderful how the Nemesis of atheism forces Sartre to accommodate God in the scheme of his Godless world and give Him the most significant role of the highest goal of all mankind, though He eludes man for ever.

Though apparently Sartre's atheistic Existentialism is far removed from Mysticism, yet in so far as it emphasizes the self-transcending nature of the *pour-soi*, it admits that the self is not self-sufficient and it has to look beyond itself incessantly in order to gain the *raison d'être* of its existence. The *pour-soi* from its very nature cannot rest content till he is metamorphosed in God. Mysticism also declares that the realization of God is the supreme goal of man. It is astonishing how the two extremes tend to meet in God. At one extreme is the godless existentialism of Sartre which is unwilling to give any place in its scheme of things to any

spiritual principle, while on the other extreme is Mysticism which declares that God is the alpha and omega of all existence. But the irony of the situation is that Sartre who started by positing the sole existence of the dead and inert *en-soi* had to give a grudging and negative status to man in the form of *pour-soi* which he conceived as empty nothingness. The spiritual principle which was thus most reluctantly positied in the form of vapoury nothingness of the *pour-soi* grew by an irresistible Nemesis into God who was an anathema to Sartre. But, like the village schoolmaster of Goldsmith, Sartre "would argue still, even though vanquished", and as if not to be accused of being responsible for his own undoing he hastened to argue that God is undoubtedly the ultimate goal of all human endeavour, yet He being self-contradictory does not exist. Rather than admit gracefully that God does have supreme status in the ontological scheme, Sartre can go even to the extent of saying that "man is a useless passion" because he wants to transcend himself in order to embrace God. As a matter of fact, it is Sartre who is contradicting himself, but by the device of defense mechanism, he projects self-contradiction in God.

It is palpable that the philosophy of atheistic Existentialism as propounded by Sartre cannot solve the existential predicament of the contemporary man despite all its promises to illuminate the possibilities of his existence. This philosophy presents a picture of human presence that cannot inspire the bewildered individual. According to it, the *pour-soi* is not responsible for the origin of its own being and yet being absolutely free, it is the creator of its own situation in the light of its chosen end. Individual's freedom involves responsibility. He is conscious of being responsible for his manner of being and for whatever happens to him, he is responsible even for the wars that are fought in this time. From the very moment of his origin, he has to "carry the weight of the world" on his own, "without anybody being able to lighten the burden'. He must have no remorse nor even regrets, as he has no excuse in view of his total freedom. Drawing the unenviable picture of the human presence and its meaning, Sartre brings home to the individual the dread inherent in the existential situation. "It is just for this reason that the *pour-soi* apprehends itself in dread, that is to say as a being who is not the originator of his own being,

nor of the being of the other, nor the *en-soi* which forms the world, but who is forced to decide on the meaning of being, in himself and everywhere outside himself. He who realizes in dread of his condition of being thrown into responsibility which goes back even to his finding himself in the world, no longer has remorse, nor regret, nor excuse; he is no more than a liberty which is itself perfectly revealed and whose being lies in this very revelation."[2] So the theme of Sartrian Existentialism stands painted in 'dread'-ful colours. The individual is irresistibly drawn towards his own destiny of a suffering hero with fatality of the Greek tragedy. Sartre further warns that any attempt on the part of the individual to take refuge from dread is nothing but self-deception.

Thus, atheistic Existentialism can promise only a brave pessimism to the struggling and suffering individual. In other words, his salvation lies in recognizing the worldly existence for what it is, a burden of responsibility that ultimately ends in Nihilism. In spite of its heroic posture this philosophy has nothing to offer to the contemporary individual by way of salvation. In sharp contrast to his unrelieved pessimism, Mysticism uplifts the suffering individual from the mire of worldly existence and puts him on the pathway to God which as St. Jñaneśvara tells us is bliss surcharged at every step and where the very path is the destination.

Having seen the futile nature of the solution of the existential problems offered by the atheistic Existentialism, we may now turn to the theistic Existentialism of Kierkegaard and Karl Jaspers and examine its claim to offer salvation to the contemporary individual struggling to give some meaning to his existence and thereby to win happiness in his life. Kierkegaard was fed up with the falsification of the Christianity at the hands of the established Church of Denmark and of the Christian philosophers who either tried to objectify Christianity or reinterpret it rationally for making it agreeable to intellectuals. He pointed out that one does not become a true Christian by acquiring the objective doctrines and rituals associated with the Christianity like moving in Christian society, visiting the Church on Sundays, declaring one's readiness to live and die for the defense of Christianity, swearing by the Biblical doctrines and undergoing the ritual of baptism. True

Christianity is subjective and internal in nature. It consists in accepting the Christian way of life by a free act of choice in the depths of one's being so that there occurs an internal transformation manifesting itself in the attitude of self-commitment. Similarly, Kierkegaard opposed the efforts of some philosophers to found Christianity on a rational basis. Hegel, for instance, held that the myth of Christ being a Son of God when interpreted rationally only means that every man contains an element of Divinity within him. But Kierkegaard severely criticized all such attempts at the rationalizing of Christianity which only destroy it. The Incarnation of Christ is the very pivot of Christianity and as such it has to be appropriated by the believer by a leap of faith. Reason will never accept the myth of Incarnation because it fails to conceive as to how God who is infinite, omniscient and omnipotent could be incarnated in a finite human being known as Jesus who led a life marked by humiliation and sacrifice on the cross. The gulf between the divine and the human is impassable for the reason. Hence the concept of Incarnation is absurd from its angle. It is faith alone that can embrace without question the revealed truth of Incarnation. This miracle of faith appropriating the objective uncertainty of Christ has been illustrated by Kierkegaard by recalling the episode of the Old Testament involving Abraham. Abraham was ordered by God to sacrifice his tender-age innocent son Isaac, and Abraham calmly sets off for Mount Moriah with Isaac, wielding his knife, in order to carry out the will of God. Kierkegaard extols the life of Faith as being the embodiment of authentic existence. He tells us that the leap of faith alone can take us beyond the fatal Either/Or; the finitude of aesthetic life/the empty infinity of the ethical. Through faith in the paradox of the Incarnation of Infinite in time we can escape the Scylla of aesthetic existence and Charybdis of the ethical.[4]

The life of faith brings salvation and opens for man the new dimension of future. It cannot be described in terms of Hegel's rational categories because it is not an idea but a state that has to be experienced. It is the fulfillment of all human endeavour directed towards the perfection of the self. When an individual surrenders unto God incarnated as Christ by a leap of faith he truly

achieves the marriage of the Infinite and the finite in his self, because the Incarnation being the paradoxical manifestation of the Infinite in time makes the synthesis of the infinite and the finite, the Eternity and time possible for that individual when his finite free-will obeys the Will of God. This embrace of the will of God by the individual's will is not theoretical but existential.

Thus, Kierkegaard's meditations on the development of the individual self through the dialectic of aesthetics-ethics-faith have been designed to drive the truth that "faith alone can make man whole."

Kierkegaard's Existentialism is the sharpest reaction against Hegel's System that is intellectual to the extreme. Hegel by presuming that human intellect is competent to unravel once for all the mysteries of being and becoming dared to chalk out the systematic details of the absolute Reality in a manner which proclaimed that nothing is hidden from searchlight of intellect. The Reality is fully transparent for the human intellect so much so that whatever is real is rational and whatever is rational is real. So Kierkegaard took his stand on the supremacy of Faith and moreover conceived Faith as being the very antithesis of Reason. He thus matched the rationalism of Hegel with his own brand of irrationalism in order to expose the presumptuousness of the former in face of the mysteries of human existence. Faith not only excludes reason but is also unmindful of ethical considerations. Ethics requires that goodness of the course of a particular action is definitively determined before it is chosen and that everything is planned in the light of reason. Abraham can never know why he is commanded by God to sacrifice Isaac or how God is going to work it out in the end. So the man of faith unquestionably, silently, and peacefully carries out the Divine command and leaves everything to the Divine will.

However, from the stand-point of Mysticism it is not necessary to banish reason in order to make room for faith because there is no ultimate incompatibility between the two. As St. Thomas Aquinas rightly tells there is no opposition between the Truth of Faith and the Truth of Reason. Though the Truth of Faith

surpasses the ability of human reason, nevertheless those things which are naturally instilled in human reason cannot be opposed to this truth. Reality is suprarational, but that does not mean that it is irrational. Moreover, faith which is opposed to reason can hardly be distinguished from blind belief. Mysticism also relates the mystic to God, but in it the self of the mystic becomes God. According to Kierkegaard the self in relating itself to God after all relates itself to itself. God seems to be only a bridge between the unauthentic, alienated self and the authentic self. The self in the beginning, the self in the middle and the self in the end maybe said to be the watchword of the Kierkegaardian existentialism. The self-transcending nature of the self does lead it to God, but far from culminating in the unitive life of bliss it only ends in the discovery of the true self. Thus, theistic Existentialism of Kierkegaard fails to go all the way on the pathway to God.

It may also be noted that the God as conceived by Kierkegaard is transcendent, infinite and personal in nature. The incarnation of Christ is the highest divinity for him. However, the trascendence and infinity of God cannot be reconciled with His personality. Personality implies limitations on account of its determinate character. Determination by characters constituting the personality of God inevitably makes Him finite. Personal God is only an appearance of the impersonal God who in His infinitude is indeterminate in nature. From the view-point of mysticism, God transcends even His impersonal nature for the thesis and the anti-thesis of the personal and the impersonal is reconciled in the synthesis of Multiform God. The mystic experiences the divine in the form of Lord Shiva for some moments and in the succeeding moments he may witness the form of Lord Rāma or some other deity. So the mystical experience testifies to the multiform nature of God and makes it clear that God cannot be limited to any type of determinate personality. God's indeterminate nature is not a matter of conjecture or inference for the mystic, but it is a matter of direct, first hand experience for him.

Karl Jaspers has also propounded the theistic variety of Existentialism. It will be interesting to juxtapose Jaspers' philosophy with Mysticism. Jaspers regarded the study of Being

as the chief task of Science and Philosophy. Science studies the being-there or the independently existing empirical world and tries to reduce its multiplicity to a unified system in an objective manner. But it cannot go far in its efforts to present an objective, unified system of knowledge embracing the totality of the empirical world because human selves with all their freedom, choice, sense of responsibility, love, frustrations and a host of other internal and subjective experiences cannot be described by the objective methods of Science. The self with all its internality belongs to the sphere of being oneself which is to be distinguished from being-there, constituting the external and objective sphere. Hence, Science is incapable of achieving its ideal of necessary and universal objectivity. Besides being-there and being-oneself, there is a third form of Being designated by Jaspers as being-in-itself. The three orders of Being are discontinuous. No single method is competent to unravel the secrets of all these forms. The being-in-itself in its absoluteness transcends the world, and to it belongs the unity and totality which Science fails to appropriate by its objective method and which Philosophy has been perennially seeking to appropriate. However, both the positivist and the idealist philosophers fail to attain the knowledge of transcendent being-in-itself. The positivist takes his stand on Science, and tries to reduce Philosophy to Science, whereas the idealist tries to reduce Science to Philosophy. The transcendence of being-in-itself can only be approached through the being-oneself which itself is self-transcending in nature. Jaspers, therefore, proceeds to philosophize from the standpoint of his own self. Now Descartes also took his stand on the primary certainty of his own self, but his interest in the subject's undoubted existence was only methodological. His purpose was only to arrive at the objective world through the gateway of the self. Descartes did not explore the vitally important elements of the self as they manifest in its liberty, creativity, responsibility, joys and sorrow, perils and triumphs, and perpetual self-transcendence. It is these elements of the existing self that can never be reduced to objectivity that constitute the most significant aspects of existence. It is through them that the Transcendent can be appropriated in its essential nature, because the Transcendent is wholly unobjectifiable. When the philosopher makes a forward movement in the exercise of his

own liberty he comes across limiting situations which make him aware of his groundedness in the Transcendent. Such limiting situations force him to realize the essential finitude and ephemerality of everything in life and the world and thereby to have possibly intimations of the Transcendent or God who exists as the all-encompassing ground of both the objective world of being-there and the subjective world of being-oneself. The existence of the Transcendent can neither be proved nor be disproved logically because it is not an object that can be grasped by the categories of reason. Just as the being-oneself is beyond the reach of those categories, the Transcendent also defies them. The influence of Kant on Jaspers is evident in the present context. However, the human self in its act of transcending himself can encounter the Transcendent. But in its liberty it can realize the possibility of a Nietzsche also who said that God is dead. The self can respond to the limiting situations of death or frustration, for instance, in any manner because it is itself a possibility that can actualize itself in its liberty in undetermined directions. Jaspers freely advances in the direction of the Transcendent with a philosophic faith, for according to him, philosophy of Existenz opens the way to the Transcendent. For an individual endowed with philosophic faith everything and every event of the world serves as a sign of the existence of God or the Transcendent. Even the ultimate shipwreck of all earthly hopes serves as a pointer to God because He as the ground of the universe is immanent in joys and tragedies alike.

Jaspers tells us that our knowledge of the Being in its three forms of being-there, being-oneself and being-in-itself is symbolic after all. The universe as a whole is like a secret text written in coded ciphers that can never be expressed in public language. Every individual has to decipher the meaning in his own experience at the level of his personal existence. He has to be perpetually alert about every happening and every fact revealed in his personal experience, because they may give him an intuition of the Transcendent in some favourable moment. Philosophies and religions are merely reports of the appropriations of truth by their respective authors. They are a testimony to the existence of the Transcendent, but they cannot be regarded as the deciphering

of the enigma of the Being-in-itself. One can enter into the spirit of these philosophies and religions by the way of personal communication and be convinced that they do bear witness to the existence of the Transcendent in their own special ways. The ciphers of nature, history and personal existence can be touched by the self in its own choice and decisions when the limit of self-determination is reached and a sort of rapport is established with the Transcendent. It is only when an individual embraces the Transcendent in absolute faith with all his imagination and will that he can calmly take in his stride both his achievements and failures and silently face the ultimate frustration without being unnerved by it. Thus, the Existentialism of Jaspers offers 'philosophic faith' to the contemporary individual who no longer finds it possible to embrace 'theological faith'. This 'philosophical faith' enables him to attain an orientation towards the Transcendent and ultimately realize his grounding in it. Such a realization alone constitutes authentic existence.

When we consider Jaspers' Existentialism from the mystical standpoint, many resemblances between that philosophy and Mysticism stand out before us. According to Mysticism, God is the be-all and end-all of all existence. In the same way the Being-in-itself or the Transcendent is postulated as the all-encompassing reality by Jaspers. However, for the mystic the realization of God is a fact of his experience, and moreover for him seeing God face to face culminates in the establishment of the identity of his self with God. For Jaspers the Transcendent remains only a possibility to the end that has to be remotely grasped by an act of 'philosophic faith'. Again, Mysticism and Jaspers regard frustrations, failures and death as the incentives which may lead the existing individual towards God or the Transcendent. Jaspers is very expressive when he calls these experiences as the limiting situations which make the free individual seek the Transcendent as the unlimited ground of everything contingent and evanescent.

But the Existentialism of Jaspers like other shades of Existentialism begins and ends with the concern of the existing individual. With all its emphasis on the self-transcending nature of the individual self and its orientation towards the Transcendent,

this philosophy cannot go beyond the magic circle of the human self. The self in its search for authentic existence has nothing to fall back upon except its freedom accompanied by a tenuous 'philosophic faith'. This freedom or liberty is nothing more than freedom to suffer heroically with the faith that even the ultimate 'ship-wreck' of all earthly hopes might perchance awaken the individual to the truth of the Transcendent being the ground of both the subjective world of being-oneself and the objective world of being-there. The realization of the identity of the self and the Transcendent remains a far cry for Jaspers. The ills and the predicament of the self can find their solution only in the realization of that identity which is a state of beatitude and peace. Moreover, a mere faith that it is grounded in the Transcendent offers a poor consolation to the self, unless it culminates in raising of the self to the status of the Transcendent.

Again, according to Jaspers, the existing individual is condemned to lead his 'existenz' comprising a mixture of achievements and failures in a world which remains for him no more than an enigma from the beginning to the end. His doctrine of ciphers is nothing but ultimate skepticism masquerading as enlightening knowledge. This doctrine declares that all human knowledge is only an unsuccessful deciphering of the world of nature, history and the Transcendent which remain forever things-in-themselves, as Kant would like to put it.

From our mystical view-point, the unenviable conclusions arrived at by Jaspers regarding the ultimate heroic undoing of the individual self and the restriction of its knowledge to mere symbols which fail to decipher the enigma of Reality are the result of his reluctance to leave the magic circle of the existing self. If the self is really grounded in the Transcendent or God, it should be possible for it to realize its true nature as God. But somehow all existentialist thinkers are afraid of facing this obvious implication of the ultimate groundedness of the self in God, because they seem to feel that the self would be lost in the infinity of God. But it seems beyond their comprehension that what the self loses in the aspect of its individuality it gains in attaining its true nature as God. But this is tantamount to going beyond

Existentialism into the realm of Mysticism. Jaspers' Existentialism is wedded to Personalism. It cannot be expected to cross over to Mysticism for fear of losing personal existence, even though Mysticism is its logical destination.

## References


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# *Mysticism and Phenomenology*

Its founder Edmund Husserl conceived Phenomenology as a method of philosophy that could enable us to reach the absolute truth. Positivism and Psychologism compromised the absolute truth, the former because of its identification with the empirical sciences that limited themselves to phenomena, and the latter because of its assumption that truth was merely a function of psychological processes. If truth is to be attained in its absoluteness, it had to be grasped through a non-empirical or non-sensuous intuition and disentangled from the psychological act in which it was conceived. Husserl realized that Mathematics was a model science in this respect because it was able to arrive at necessary and universal truth by employing non-sensuous intuition. Truths of Mathematics also enjoy an objective validity independent of the psychological acts by which they are grasped. Following the lead of Mathematics Edmund Husserl derived the phenomenological method, which claimed to get at the foundation of consciousness in subtler and subtler stages. First, it analyses the innumerable acts of consciousness so as to discover behind them the essential structures (eidos) of each kind of intentional act. In the second stage, it goes deeper to discover the structures common to all various regions of eidos or "a priori of pure reason". In the last stage, it reveals the presence of the transcendent pure consciousness itself. This transcendental pure consciousness is the veritable foundation of the unity of experience and the unity of "the world".

But Husserl came up against almost insuperable difficulties when he tried to orient his reflection towards the phenomenological analysis of the basic structures of consciousness. The acts of our consciousness are inveterately intentional in the sense that they insensibly glide towards the objects referred to by them, and thus fail to attend to themselves and their role in the constitution of the world of experience. This habitual tendency of the acts of consciousness to advance beyond

themselves towards their referents or objects can be curbed by deliberate act of suspension of our belief in the existence of the real world. This act of suspension of our belief in the existence of the real world is not to be confused with the Cartesian method of doubting the existence of the object world so as to arrive at the self-certainty of the thinking self (Cogito). The motive behind phenomenological suspension is to make us conscious of the fact that everything that exits must exist as a phenomenon appearing in our consciousness. Thus, every effort is to be made to get the phenomena stand before the contemplative eye of the philosopher without any preconceived notions of that phenomena being subjective or objective, internal or external. Husserl's guiding principle "Zu dem Sachen"(To the things) was an invitation to philosophers to get down to the proper business of philosopher which consisted in examining and describing all kinds of objects bereft of presuppositions that reveals them as phenomena.

In the "Ideen I" Husserl illustrates as to how basic experience like that of perception of some concrete material object and its modification by memory, imagination, signification etc., can be phenomenologically analysed. His purpose is to get at the basic structures of conciousness that play their role in the process of perception. When a perceived object passes through a series of modifications called as memory, imagination, signification etc., it becomes clear that in each step the object presented in perception is modified when the mode of knowledge is changed. A perceived tree, a remembered tree and an imagined tree are not the same sort of phenomena: they have quite different senses. This means that each noetic modification of the object presented leads to a noematic transformation. This brings to light the significant facts that the object depends for its being on the forms of consciousness and that consciousness is a dynamic process which sustains its object through the flow of time. Furthermore, it is also made clear that consciousness plays a constitutive role in the presentation of its object. The noematic characters like "veritable being, doubtful being, likely being, possible being", correspond to the various noetic "doxic modes" viz., certitude, doubt, conjecture, supposition etc. Because independent real being is posited by the doxic act of consciousness, it is possible to suspend belief in the

existence of things (Epoche). This Epoche is different from Descartes' methodic doubt inasmuch as the latter leaves us with the Cogito alone thinking its own existence, while in the former we are left with a Cogito along with its total set of cognitions. Thus, Husserl draws our attention to one very significant point while describing the process of phenomenological reduction. It is possible for us to suspend our belief in the existence of every external object, but this epoche does not affect the whole content of consciousness that remains intact. This makes it evident that conscious act of the self is more fundamental than the thing referred to by it. The primacy of consciousness over the thing is also manifest in the process of perception. The thing is perceived by consciousness aspect by aspect, but consciousness correlates those partial aspects given to it successively and produces the belief in the unity of the thing. Thus, consciousness which retains the past to unify it with the present in a way that anticipates the continuance of it into future is the necessary a priori condition of the experience of that thing. This proves that the consciousness is indispensable for imparting unity and objectivity to the thing as perceived. Phenomenology should, therefore, direct its attention to the act of consciousness, as it is directly available for analysis.

Hence consciousness constitutes our object according to Husserl. This consciousness or the transcendental ego is essentially active, and through its activities of knowing, willing, feeling and living is constituted the human world. But this world constituted by the transcendental ego is real and essentially other. Our being-in-the-world implies that we are dependent upon that world. However, despite his idealistic orientation reflected in his notion of the transcendental ego, Husserl stressed that the absolute truth can be determined only by which it can be "given effectively itself", and not that which is only "retained or anticipated", or "remembered or imagined". The ideal truth with all its clarity, directness and totality can only be determined by and derived from the self -knowledge of consciousness-in-action. It can function as a " regulative idea" or standard for judging the various kinds of "truths" about objects in the external world.

The goal of Phenomenology is to reach the "given" in its purity, naivety and originality in order to "find out how things really are". "That is the beginning of all wisdom although it is not the end, and it is a wisdom with which one can not dispense no matter how profoundly one may be engaged in theoretization".[1] The naive grasp of things on the level of full consciousness is only possible by a careful application of the phenomenological method. As Husserl tells us, "The will to hold oneself purely to that which is given can only succeed if, in every experience, we return to the ultimate transcendental essential liaisons, so that *pure intuition is constantly in play in a methodic way*". "In proceeding thus, one has always a new living truth drawn from the living source of the absolute life and a self-consciousness turned towards that absolute life in a constant sentiment of responsibility to self".[2]

Husserl is aware of the problems that his phenomenology has to face because it posits the absolute criterion of truth as centered in transcendental consciousness. If the transcendental consciousness or the Cogito is regarded as the paradigm of absolute truth , Husserl asks ,then how can the existence of other Cogitos and world common to them be proved to be true ? Does Phenomenology not land us in solipsism and relativism, the twin problems associated with anti-realistic philosophy? Husserl comes to realize that these problems have arisen because of the Epoche which has limited him to the reality of transcendental Cogito, but he feels that the solution of above problems does not lie in retracting his steps from the Epoche which is veritable pivot of his phenomenology. He must seek the evidence for the existence of the other Cogitos and the world common to them within "the transcendental facts of my phenomenological sphere". And for arriving at such evidence he recommends a "second Epoche" which will separate out any foreign element still clinging to the transcendental ego and leave only that which is proper to me (*das Mir-Eigene*)". The initial Epoche had not gone far enough in isolating the transcendental Ego or consciousness because it had merely bracketed the naive belief in the independent existence of every object of consciousness, but it left intact the "onto-noematic" content of consciousness or full range of cogitations of the Cogito. Hence Husserl realises the need of a deeper Epoche

which will eliminate all 'otherness' by a supreme act of abstraction. This second epoche succeeds in suspending all other objective bodies excepting my own "organic body" which is an inalienable part of my experience in the sense that organs initiate the actions directed towards the external world. Says Husserl, "By putting them into action I can crash into things, push etc., and thus act through my body".[3] This gives me the intuition that I myself, in the depths of my subjective consciousness, must be essentially "a psycho-physical organism". "I now discover that if the ego constitutes the world, it also constitutes me as psycho-physical organic unity in the world."[4] Thus, a thoroughgoing act of epoche enables Husserl to rediscover objectivity at the root of subjectivity. As he puts it: "The fact that in general I can oppose that being which is proper to be me to something other, the fact that I, who am I, can be conscious of that other that I am not (of something which is foreign to me) presupposes that the modes of consciousness which belong to me are not simply modes of consciousness of myself".[5] Thus. the "modes of consciousness of myself" are not the only elements of "the modes of consciousness that belongs to me". The latter include not only awareness of my body as a psycho-physical organism acting on the world but is also an intuition of other bodies which act on the world in a way similar to mine. Hence "if in the primordial sphere of my perception there appears as a distinct object a body which 'resembles' mine, that is to say if it has a structure thanks to which it must submit to the phenomenon of association (accouplement) with mine, it seems immediately clear that it must at the same moment acquire the signification of organism which is transferred to it by mine".[6] In this way, the other ego is known by me as body which is really the psychophysical organism similar to mine .The other ego exists like me as an original centre of truth.

So Husserl's theory of "accoupling association" establishes the existence of many egos coexisting in the world, all sharing in a community of action, language, ideas, etc. that refer to an objective, spatio-temporal world. This theory solves in one stroke the twin problem of the knowledge of the other egos and the existence of a common objective world in space and time. The second Epoche thereby succeeds in solving the terrible problems

of solipsism and relativism which threatened to undermine the entire structure of Phenomenology. It is clear from the succinct account of Husserl's Phenomenology presented above that he tried to steer clear of the Scylla and Charybdis of Naive Realism on the one hand and Absolute Idealism on the other. He rejected the absolute being in itself existing independently of the ego and the idealist's construsion of the ego into an absolute thing. He brought to light the real sense of being, viz., the ego's temporal constitution of a world. His Phenomenology is primarily a method of philosophising meant for charting the anatomy of human consciousness so as to reveal its basic structures. It stands for letting the phenomena to speak for themselves. It is a method of presuppositionless inquiry, which is non-empirical in its approach. As explained above, Husserl employed the device of Epoche of bracketing the whole world of objects in order to study the consciousness in its essential nature. But intentionality being inherent in consciousness, the whole set of cogitations in the form of perception, memory, imagination, etc., remains intact in consciousness inspite of the abstraction of all objectivity from the domain of consciousness. So, Husserl opts for a second Epoche involving a more radical abstraction which concentrated on the subjectivity of counsciousness to the exclusion of all objectivity. But the subjectivity reveals itself as being psycho-physical in nature because the organic body is experienced as an inseparable aspect of the psychical phenomena. It is my organic body that becomes the bridge between my subjectivity and the objectivity constituted by other egos accompanying organic bodies resembling my own as well as their common objective world existing in space and time. Thus, the second Epoche enables Husserl to rediscover the spatio-temporal world of subjects and objects in his Phenomenology.

Let us examine Husserl's Phenomenology from our mystical angle of vision. As has been made amply clear above, with all its transcendental approach to the analysis of human knowledge and experience after the manner of Kant, Phenomenology has after all succeded only in resurrecting the epistemology of realism. Husserl employs the technique of Epoche in order to suspend our naive belief in the existence of objects intended by the various

activities of consciousness in the form of perception, memory, imagination, signification etc., so that consciousness in its transcendent nature might stand revealed. But it seems that the shadow of Brentano's realism darkens his meditations, and he is forced to resurrect objectivity at the very root of subjectivity that is revealed to his vision through the phenomenological Epoche. This is veritably an anticlimax to Husserl's search for the a priori and transcendental structures of human consciousness. It would be enlightening to recall in this context the parallel analysis of human consciousness that is undertaken by the *Advaita Vedānta* of Śri Śaṃkaraćarya when he goes beyond the three states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep, and encounters the fourth state of consciousness designated as *Turiyā*. According to Śaṃkara the Turiyā state of consciousness is reached by a process of sustained ethico-spiritual endeavour involving a gradual transcendence of six planes of consciousness. He tells us that "At the outset, I shall define for you the various levels of consciousness, which lead ultimately to the right knowledge.... The first step to right knowledge is the desire to know, and it is known as the good will (*śubheccā*). The second step is reflection (*vicāranā*), and the third is the diminution of all attachment felt by the mind towards external objects (*tanumanasi*). The realization of *sattvaguna* is the fourth step (*sattvatpatti*). The next, the fifth, is the non-attachment (*anāsakti*), and the sixth is the absence of the consciousness of all external objects (*padārthabhāvanā*). The seventh and the last step is that which leads to the stage of *Turiyā*, or the Transcendental Consciousness."[7] In the seventh plane, the consciousness of difference is totally lost because one is finally established in one's own ultimate nature. This is also called the experience of the *nirvikalpa samādhi* wherein the mind functions no longer, where there are no objects of knowledge, and where the *Ātman*, the witnessing consciousness is the sole reality.[8] Such knowers of *Brahman* are indeed *Brahman*, for they are not other than *Brahman*. They are not conscious of anything within them such as the idea of 'I and mine', nor are they conscious of anything outside them such as 'this or that'. They lose themselves, as it were, in the infinite ocean of bliss, which is the bliss of the inmost *Ātman*, and they remain forever absorbed in a grand silence.

Thus, according to the mystic-philosopher Śaṃkara the transcendent consciousness or the *Ātman* or the *Brahman* is pure and free from all subjectivity and objectivity. Neither the body, nor the senses, nor the vital force, nor the ego constitute the Ātman. Neither the earth, nor water, nor fire, nor air, nor space, nor their products constitute it. It is none other than the supereme Brahman, non-dual, of the nature of existence-consciousness-bliss, and which constitutes the substratum of all names and forms.

Whereas the Epoche of Husserl succeeds only in establishing the psycho-physical nature of consciousness, the Epoche of Śaṃkara leads him to the pure, homogeneous, blissful consciousness free from all psychical and physical differences. Husserl initially turns away from the naive view according to which the conscious ego and objective world exist independently of each other. He realises the transcendental ego at the heart of reality. And yet by a second Epoche he resurrects the realistic world-view in the garb of the ultimate psycho-physical nature of the ego. His thought comes to a full circle - leaving naive realism, it enters into a transcendental idealism, and again returns to naive realism masquerading as the phenomenological objectivism.

We conclude that the nature of consciousness as brought out by mystical experience is true to reality. Consciousness, as we saw above, in its purity transcends all objective differences. There is no heterogeneity in it. It is infinite. It is *saccidānanda* (Being-Bliss-Knowledge). The mystic maintains Epoche or *Mauna* when he realises his identity with it. Saint Tukārām advises the spiritual aspirant to suspend all mental imaginings so that the '*Vastu*' or absolute Reality may reveal "Itself" in "Its" essential structure, and be experienced in its essential structure as it is given. Husserl also laid emphasis on the "will to hold oneself to that which is really given"[9], but in the end the realistic presuppositions inherited from Brentano proved too strong for him to overcome, and he lapsed into realism.

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4. Ibid, p.88
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6. Ibid, p.96
7. Śankarāćārya, "Sarva-Vedānta-Siddhāntasāra-Sangraha", verses 938-40
8. Ibid, verse 873
9. St. Tukārāma, "The Bāra Abangas".

# *Mysticism and Pragmatism*

Pragmatism as explained by its most powerful exponent William James connotes a temper or an attitude towards philosophical problems and a method of settling philosophical disputes. James was equally dissatisfied with the tough-minded empiristic-materialistic scientism and tender-minded rationalistic-idealistic absolutism. According to him Monism, whether materialistic or spiritualistic, conceives reality as a "block universe" or a rigidly deterministic system that has no room for moral freedom and responsibility of man. He asks, " If everything, man included, is the mere effect of the primitive nebula or the infinite substance, what becomes of moral responsibility, freedom of action, individual effort and aspiration; what indeed of need, uncertainty, choice, novelty and strife?" The individual is reduced to a puppet in the hands of the absolute substance. Pragmatism has the merit of reconciling the tender-minded and the tough-minded attitudes because "it can be religious like rationalism but at the same time like empiricism, it can preserve the richest intimacy with facts."

Pragmatism represents the familiar 'empiricistic attitude' "in a more radical and in a less objectionable form than it has ever yet assumed. A pragmatist turns his back resolutely and once for all upon a lot of inveterate habits dear to professional philosophers. He turns away from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad a priori reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems and pretended absolutes and origins. He turns towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action and towards power. That means the empiricist temper remains regnant and rationalistic temper is sincerely given up. It means that the open air and possibilities of nature, as against dogma, artificiality, and the pretense of finality in truth."[1] Pragmatism as a method of solving metaphysical disputes believes that theories are instruments for our practical guidance rather than answers to intellectual enigmas. The word 'pragmatism' is derived from the Greek term 'pragma' which means practice, action; accordingly, Charles Peirce propounded the pragmatic theory of Meaning of

beliefs or ideas. Peirce's pragmatic maxim lays down that "our idea of anything is our idea of sensible effects". To put the theory in Peirce's own words, "It appears, then that the rule for attaining the third grade of clearness of apprehension is as follows: Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then our own conception of these effects is the whole of the object."[2] For instance, our conception of the 'hardness' of diamond simply means that many other substances will not scratch the diamond. Likewise, the meaning of our conception of a thing's heaviness consists of the practical effect observed by us when we remove support from that thing, that is, the phenomenon of the falling of that thing to the ground. Taking his cue from Peirce, William James argues that the function of philosophy is to find out what definitive practical difference would it make in our lives if this world-formula or that is believed by us to be true. If there is no practical difference evident in our lives as a result of our belief in rival theories of Monism and pluralism, materialism and spiritualism, theism and atheism etc., then there is absolutely no difference between them for us. Philosophy is not concerned with ideas that do not make a difference to our living. It should accept and use only those systems of beliefs and ideas that have been proved to be conducive to the business of living. The theory of Evolution has made it clear to us that intellect is only an instrument in the struggle for survival, protection and enrichment of life, and man thinks and philosophizes in order to live.

Thus, pragmatism is a method of resolving metaphysical disputes that would otherwise seem to be interminable. It steers clear of skepticism and agnosticism on one hand, and barren intellectual doctrines of rationalism on the other. Unlike the negative approach of skeptics and agnostics, Pragmatism does not hold its judgement in suspense and declares that what could not be attained by human intellect can certainly be attained by human will. Pragmatism also avoids the pitfalls of rationalism by rejecting the latter's claim that there are eternal and a priori truths, the so-called first principles and "categories". Rationalism is wrong in holding that philosophising is an end in itself, and its sole function is to depict an accurate picture of the absolute

Reality. "Pragmatism" says William James, " is anti-intellectualist to the extent that in its disdain for metaphysical abstractions it is positivistic; in emphasizing practical aspects it is utilitarian; and in appealing to particulars it is nominalistic."[3]

Besides turning away from the a priori first principles of rationalism, the pragmatic method looks "towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts." It is this orientation of Pragmatism that has figured in its well-known doctrine of truth. As we have already seen in the foregoing paragraphs, it was Peirce who regarded the sense-effects as constituting the meaning of an idea and went on to define an idea as "a plan of action", "a rule of action", or "a habit". William James developed this theory of meaning into the pragmatic theory of truth by taking one step further. He said that an idea or belief is true if it guides us to successful activity or establishes valuable habits. It is false if it leads to unsatisfactory consequences or establishes destructive habits. A true idea or belief is that which "works", and it may work in various senses in different situations and contexts. A belief when put into operation may lead to actual sensible effects predicted by it, and is thus verified in actual experience just as a scientific hypothesis is tested by actual observation in respect of conclusions drawn from it. My belief that there is a lake of water yonder would be said to work if on my approaching the place I actually experience the sense-effects of touching water and of quenching my thirst. So, workability here means getting the "cash-value" in terms of sensible effects. Secondly, a belief or an idea that coheres with other well-established beliefs can also be said to work pragmatically. James refers to the pragmatic account of truth given by Schiller and Dewey approvingly in this context. "Truth in our ideas and beliefs means the same thing as it means in science. It means.....that ideas (which themselves are but parts of our experience} become true in so far as they help us to get in to satisfactory relation with other parts of our experience;.....any idea that will carry us prosperously from any one part of our experience to any other part, linking things satisfactorily, working securely, simplifying, saving labour is true for just so much, true in so far forth, true instrumentally." Thirdly, the criterion of workability is said to connote simply the healthy effects on feeling and attitude

towards the world produced by religious beliefs, which must be regarded as true on account of their satisfactory effects in the above sense. In the case of religious beliefs there is no cash-value in terms of sensible effects available. As such a religious belief can be regarded as workable in the pragmatic sense if it has a beneficial effect on the moral and spiritual outlook of man, and makes for optimism rather than pessimism. James thus enlarges his pragmatic conception of truth so as to include in the idea of practical utility those of verification and logical consistency. He even goes further and says that the satisfaction of higher moral and religious demands also entitles a belief to be called as true. Thus, he seems to identify the true and the good. He comes very near to such an identification when he says,"Let me now say only this, that truth is one species of good, and not, as is usually supposed, a category distinct from good, coordinate with it. The true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good, too for definite, assignable reasons."[4]

James concludes that pluralism, theism, individualism and indeterminism agree with the pragmatic temper best. A pluralistic universe not only makes room for individual freedom but it can also be saved piece-meal by the efforts of each individual. Thus, pluralism is melioristic: the world can be saved if all individuals do their best. Theism alone can satisfy our emotional and volitional needs. A finite God endowed with a personality like human beings alone can help us in our moral and religious endeavour because we can enter into communion with Him and seek His help in making this universe better and better. Of course, this theistic hypothesis cannot be scientifically demonstrated or refuted. But it is the outcome of our will to believe and as such it is justified on pragmatic grounds. As James points out in his famous essay on 'What Pragmatism Means?' Pragmatism, though empiricistic in temper, does not harbor the materialistic bias of traditional empiricism and has no a priori prejudice against theology. "If theological ideas prove to have a value for concrete life, they will be true for Pragmatism, in the sense for being good for so much."5 Thus, Pragmatism is at great advantage both over positivistic empiricism, with its anti-theological bias, and over

religious rationalism with its exclusive interest in the remote, the noble, the simple and the abstract.

It is in this context of James' opposition to both the classical rationalism and the classical empiricism that we can appreciate his doctrine of Radical Empiricism. Radical Empiricism regards pure experience in its primitive innocence undisturbed by conceptual thinking as the reality. Reality as pure experience is hard to discover. We may get glimpses of reality but we cannot lay our hands on it. In its immediacy pure experience is unity in diversity. Hence empiricism is wrong in supposing that our experience consists of small bits of independent sensations that are joined together by the so-called "Laws of Association." Similarly, rationalism is also wrong when it says that the independent bits of sensation are organised by the categories of the Unity of Apperception or the Self. Pure original experience comes in a flux that is already organised by categories and relations inherent in it. Categories and relations, therefore, are matters of direct perception. Yet reality is not ready-made; it is malleable, plastic, and still in the making waiting to receive final touches at our hands.

Radical Empiricism with its conception of an unfinished growing, indetermined reality easily harmonises with the pragmatic view of truth. What is true of reality is a matter of human creation. Truth grows, comes to be, in finite human experience; it is human enterprise. Again, Radical Empiricism is pluralistic because un-sophistic experience reveals multiplicity and diversity that lie unreconciled, and not a single harmonious reality called the Absolute. Monism of the Absolute leaves no room for our finite consciousness, for time and change, for freedom of will, for novelty of the unexpected. It leads to ironclad determinism, to sacrifice of the individual freedom at the alter of the Absolute, and to fatalism. Radical Empiricism also has the merit of providing us with a theistic God whom being a part and parcel of the universe is Himself endeavouring to give a moral and spiritual shape to the world. Thus, God proves to be a sympathetic and powerful helper of human kind struggling to mould the world to its heart's design. Philosophy of Radical empiricism also gets

rid of the problem of Evil which has proved to be a stumbling-block to Monism's God who is conceived as the creator of the universe which contains evil as co-existing with good. Theism of the monistic variety finds it almost impossible to reconcile Creator God's omnipotence with the presence of Evil in the created world. But the theism of Radical Empiricism conceives God merely as one entity among multifarious entities of the universe that just exists uncreated. Such a God whom is endowed with limited power; knowledge and goodness only can never be held responsible for evil. Like human beings God has also to grapple with evil, though He is in possession of superhuman power. God and human beings coexist in an unconditioned world that can confront them with fortuitous situations (tychism) full of possibilities of progress or regress, betterment or degradation, good or evil (meliorism).

Thus William James tries to bring home to us the compatibility of the metaphysics of radical empiricism with the epistemology of Pragmatism. In his Gifford Lectures entitled "Varieties of Religious experience" he has made an analytical study of the experience of prominent saints and mystics the world over and has arrived at some important characteristics of religious life on the basis of his empiricistic and pragmatic methodology. According to him religion is characterised by a belief in the reality of some higher spiritual world that not only encompasses the visible world but also controls its on-goings. The aim of a man devoted to religion is to establish a rapport with the powers of that unseen spiritual world in order to seek their assistance in moulding the events of the visible world to the benefit of mankind. This intimate personal contact with the higher power (call it God or Law) is established through inner communion or Prayer. As a result of prayer the work is actually accomplished, that is, energy really flows from the spiritual domain and changes the course of events in the visible world in conformity with the desires cherished by the devotee. Owing to his life in the spirit, there occurs a suffusion of altruistic and humanistic emotions in the devotee so that he dedicates his life to the service of mankind. At the same time, he experiences a new zest in life that is now marked by enchantment and bliss unspeakable. As regards the mystical experiences of the

divine presence, visions, auditions etc., James advances the hypothesis that they arrive through the gateway of what he calls the "subliminal consciousness." Spiritual energy flows through this level of the psyche of the mystic and brings about wonderful transformation in his personality.

James has thus provided a very refreshing analysis of religious consciousness and has also attempted to establish the validity of religious experiences and belief in God on pragmatic grounds. He is also to be credited with demolishing the psycho-analytical doctrine which holds that religious phenomena are rooted in the sexual propensity of men, and that they are at best a sublimation of that powerful urge. He has convincingly argued that religious consciousness and sexual consciousness are poles apart from each other inasmuch as they radically differ with respect to their motives, objects and purposes.

In view of James' remarkable insight in religion and its phenomena it has been aptly said that he is pragmatic philosopher of religion whereas Charles Peirce is the pragmatic philosopher of science. John Dewey, the third notable exponent of Pragmatism in America, adopts the evolutionists' standpoint in philosophical reflection and concentrates on the ethical, social and educational problems. Like James, he also revolts against intellectualism, transcendentalism and eternalism of the Absolute Idealism of Bradley and Royce. Man does not simply have cognitive side to his being which is engaged in the intellectual understanding of reality, but he is also affective-conative in his primordial nature. Indeed, it is the conative urge to live that determines the goals of all living beings, including human beings, in their struggle for survival. As is evident from biological evolution, living beings have developed cognitive abilities for the realisation of the goal of self-preservation willed by them. Intellect and its products like science and philosophy are to be judged as true or false according to their efficacy or inefficacy in resolving the tensions of concrete "problematic situations" arising before men. Dewey's Pragmatism is known as Instrumentalism or Experimentalism because it insists on measuring the worth of scientific and philosophical doctrines by their contributions to such resolution.

For Dewey, reality is not a ready-made and completely given system lying behind and transcending the phenomenal world, and which has to be discovered by means of abstract rational categories. The old philosophies, which depict the vision of a reality wherein man's strivings, are already eternally fulfilled, his errors already eternally transcended, and his beliefs already eternally comprehended are out of tune with pragmatic temper of Dewey. Actual experience reveals a world which is changing, growing, developing in unpredictable directions but which can be moulded by intelligent administration for justice, happiness and well being of man. Correspondingly, man ceases to be merely a thinking being interested in understanding the world for the sake of understanding alone; rather he is a concrete being swayed by aversions and affections, and cherishing beliefs which sustain him in concrete life-situations characterised by uncertainty, change, novelty and strife. According to Dewey, "Philosophy must become a method of moral and political diagnosis and prognosis; the world is in the making, and we must help to make it." In this process of world moulding directed to the fulfillment of our own ends, we can succeed only if we substitute a new evolutionary logic and way of thinking for the old static logic. Thinking should become "operational" i.e., it should be treated as an instrument for the "removal of collisions between what is given and what is wanted - a means of realizing human desires, of securing an arrangement of things which means satisfaction, fulfillment, happiness."[5] Successful ideas are true ideas. The effective idea is an idea that works or issues in success; its success is its truth. We should be prepared to change or transform our ideas constantly in order to make them work for accomplishing a harmonized situation. Dewey insists that the process by which a harmonized situation is brought about is to be treated as an inseparable part of the situation. The truth-value attaches to the process and its product as a whole. The situation viewed in isolation from the process by which it has been brought into existence is merely a fact that cannot be called true.

We can understand and appreciate the spirit of Dewey's instrumentalism if we consider briefly its application to problems

of moral philosophy. Absolute Idealism recommended an ethics, based on values which being rooted in the very structure of reality are eternal. With his commitment to the pragmatic concept of a phenomenal, empirical, plastic pluralistic universe, Dewey not only rejected the idealistic metaphysics centering round a transcendent, fixed and monolithic reality, but he also refuted the concept of eternal values embedded in that reality. The concept of eternal moral values is repugnant to scientific temper of pragmatism because science is interested in keeping itself close to empirical facts. As such the concept of moral value must take into account the fact of enjoyment imparted by the desired object. But in his reaction against the concept of eternal values, Dewey does not embrace the other extreme of ethical naturalism that holds that value is constituted by mere impulsive liking, desire or enjoyment. He therefore disagrees with the "empirical theory" of R.B. Perry that identifies value or good with an "object of interest". An object cannot be said to have value simply by virtue of its being the object of enjoyment or interest because it may have produced the enjoyment casually only. In order to qualify for being called valuable the liking or enjoying of an object should be the outcome of an intelligently controlled experiment. Thus, while the "rationalistic method" does not trust the capacity of experience to develop its own regulative standard" of value, the "empirical method" tends to assign value to "enjoyments actually experienced irrespective of the method or operation by which they are brought into existence." Dewey does not approve of such a bifurcation between "rational method" and "empirical method". He has proposed a doctrine of value that is the outcome of a reconciliation of the two methods. Though he disapproves of rationalistic tendency to relegate the goods and evils concretely experienced by us to "an inferior order of Being" and to superimpose eternal values upon them, yet he sees merit in the emphasis that "rational method" places upon the role of thought in transforming the subjective experience of enjoyment into an objective judgement of value. "The fundamental trouble with current empirical theory of values is that it merely formulates and justifies the socially prevailing habit of regarding enjoyments as they are actually experienced as values in and of themselves." The fact that something yields enjoyment or pleasure poses a problem

to judgement. How shall the enjoyment be rated? Is it a value or is it not? There is all the difference between "the enjoyed" and "the enjoyable", "the desired" and "the desirable", "the satisfying" and "the satisfactory". Dewey's theory of value thus insists on the introduction of "operational thinking" without which "we oscillate between a theory that, in order to save the objectivity of judgements of values isolates them from experience and nature, and a theory that, in order to save their concrete and human significance, reduces them to mere statements about our own feelings." It is true that there is no value except where there is satisfaction, but there have to be certain conditions fulfilled to transform a satisfaction into a value. An object having value is radically different from an object giving merely a feeling of enjoyment. As Dewey puts it, "Judgements about values are judgements about the conditions and the results of experienced objects; judgements about that which should regulate the formation of our desires, affections and enjoyments."[7]

Now that we have before us the main doctrines of pragmatic philosophy as propounded by Peirce, James and Dewey, we can easily assess their worth from the standpoint of Mysticism. With regard to the pragmatic theory of reality, we have seen that all these thinkers conceive reality as growing, developing, plastic and as pluralistic in character. This view of reality is more a reaction against the so-called static, "block universe" view of reality put forth by Absolute idealists than a metaphysics supported by logical arguments. James and Dewey argue that their pragmatic metaphysics should replace the idealistic one simply because they wished to make room for individual freedom, change and novelty without which the universe would not be a place worth living for the "tough minded", hard-headed empiricists. The ridiculous implication is that metaphysics should answer to human wishes rather than reality as it is objectively experienced. Mystic experiences reveal reality as all-pervasive homogeneous mass of consciousness and bliss wherein the distinction between the experiencer and the experienced is dissolved. Similarly, the relativities of Eternity and Time, Permanence and Change, Unity and Plurality are transcended. As for the individual freedom which is so much cherished by the pragmatists, we can only recall some

of the utterances of mystics in the state of ecstatic mystic experience for showing that the freedom of pragmatic concept pales into insignificance when compared with power and freedom experienced by the mystics. The mystic of the Taittiriya Upanishad (1.10) ejaculates with joy, "I am the mover of the tree, namely the tree of the body or the tree of the world, my fame is like the top of a mountain, lofty and super-eminent. My source lies in the holy original Being. I live immortally like the luminous being in the Sun." Another Taittiriya mystic singing the song of universal unity contemplates, "How wonderful! How wonderful! I am the first born of Law. I have lived before the Gods. I am the source of immortality. He who gives me keeps me. I devour as food the devourer of all food, which is as much as to say both the objective world and the subjective world are resolved in me. I fill the whole universe with the splendour as of the sun. (Taittiriya Upanishad. III. 10.5-6).

In this context, the inadequacy of the pragmatic concept of a finite God, struggling to make the good victorious over the evil in a universe alien to Him, becomes all the more palpable. A finite God fails to satisfy the religious aspirations of man who craves for worship of God who is infinite, omnipotent and omniscient, *sui-generis* and the origin of all reality and value. The mystic actually experiences all things concentrated in God, and all things issuing from Him and being resolved in Him. The vision of God leads to the identity of mystic with God, and he becomes automatically morally and axiologically linked up with God. With the realization of the ethico-spiritual *Summum Bonum* all his desires are fulfilled (āpta-kāma). Consequently, he becomes desireless (akāma). This desirelessness becomes the hallmark of a mystic. Such a culmination of the ethics of mysticism is indeed a far cry from the "operational" value-system so assiduously propounded by John Dewey. In fact, Dewey's concept of operational values is a halfway house between the rationalist concept of transcendent eternal values and the empiricist concept of value as subjective enjoyment pure and simple. He admits that the subjective feeling of the enjoyment of some object is transformed into value only when it is subsumed under the ideals of reason. It is reason that imparts an objectivity and eternity to the subjective and casual

feeling of enjoyment. Fundamental values are eternal because they are rooted in God. Our enjoyments must approximate to the eternal values revealed by reason. They are good to the extent to which they participate in eternal values.

Before concluding our discussion, we may briefly consider the pragmatic doctrine of Truth. The quintessence of the doctrine is that true belief is a belief that works. William James has cleverly included the elements of the rival coherent and correspondence theories in this pragmatic doctrine. He widened the connotation of the pragmatic concept of "successful working" of a belief so as to mean by it the correspondence of that belief with actual facts (cash-value) and its coherence with previously established system of beliefs (harmony). He then goes on to affirm that in matters of religion, workability of belief may consist in its capacity to promote our higher values. Thus, James' theory of Truth ceases to be a pragmatic theory. It becomes an eclectic theory which borrows elements of truth from all the rival doctrines in order to pre-empt criticism. But this simply amounts to self-contradiction. Strictly speaking, pragmatism identifies the truth of a belief with the successful working of that belief. But as has always been clear to even a child learning at the knee of his mother, a falsehood may work as successfully as truth. Of course, all true beliefs work successfully but it does not follow that all beliefs which work successfully are true. Thus, successful working can at best be regarded as a sign of the possible truth of the belief in question, but it cannot be said to constitute its truth. The pragmatic identification of truth with workability is based on false logic, for no simple conversion of the proposition " All true beliefs work" into "All beliefs which work are true" is admissible. In as much as a belief is the reference of the mind to an object assumed to be real, independent and objective, its truth must consist in its correspondence, in some manner, to that objective reality. The manner of correspondence may be a point of serious controversy among philosophers, but there is little doubt as regards the relevance of correspondence to the truth of a belief. So far as mystic experience goes the saint comes in direct and immediate contact with God in his intuitive apprehension. The truth of mystic experience transcends the stage of correspondence and carries its

own certificate so much so that it ceases to have any difference with reality. In mystic experience the epistemological quest for truth and the metaphysical reality of God become indistinguishable. According to pragmatic theory of truth a belief does not serve as a referent to some objective reality. Its truth, therefore, does not depend on its capacity to represent objective reality correctly. Rather the belief has its *raison d'être* in man's will to believe, and it 'becomes' true in so far as it works successfully for the fulfillment of subjective inclinations. The pragmatic theory is thus vitiated through and through by subjectivism, relativism and skepticism. Though Pragmatism claims to be anti-metaphysical, it is itself based on non-pragmatic metaphysical presupposition. It takes for-granted that reality is benevolent enough to answer to human aspirations. It is fit arena for the successful working of human beliefs. Otherwise, how could human beliefs work if the universe were unfriendly? Such a foundational belief in the goodness of the universe cannot be established pragmatically. Thus, the whole edifice of pragmatism is founded on a non-pragmatic truth.

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# *Ranade's Mysticism*

The renowned philosopher-mystic Prof. R.D. Ranade showed a rare combination of the scientific and mystical tendencies that makes for true greatness in philosophy. He not only had deep insights into the nature of Reality but also possessed marvelous gift of giving them a rational-scientific exposition. Not long after getting initiation into spiritual life from his Guru, Shri Bhau Sāheb Māhārāj, at the age of fourteen, he began having mystical experiences that continued throughout his life. To justify spiritual experiences philosophically became the problem of all problems for him at the outset of his philosophical career. Soon, during a visit to the Mutt of Śaṃkarāćārya at Benaras he happened to hear the devotional songs of Śankarāćārya recited in the Mutt. It made him 'pause and think how an Advaitic philosopher could at the same time make room for devotional songs in his philosophical teaching.' That to him was the "crux" which impelled him to make a serious study of Indian and European Philosophy 'with the intent of finding Eastern and Western thought a justification for spiritual life.'[1] Himself a mystic, he unraveled the secrets of spiritual life with the power and clarity of his own. While keeping himself for most part in the background, he spoke through the sages and mystics of the Upaniṣads and the Bhagavadgītā, of Marathi and Hindi, of Kannada and Christianity, and developed his philosophy of God-realization by the method of "construction through critical exposition". If Rational Mysticism, which had hitherto been regarded as a contradiction in terms, is accepted today as a truism, it is not a little due to the teachings of Ranade. An eminent marathi scholar has aptly called him the "Paṇini of spiritual life." He emphasized the inseparability of the spiritual life from the morality, analyzed its manifold incentives, surveyed the "Pathway" showing both the dangerous pit-falls besetting it and the lamp-posts illuminating it, and revealed the acme of beatific realization as the crowning glory of spiritual life.

## *The Philosophy of Beatification*

Ranade's philosophy may be called the philosophy of Beatificism. Bliss, ecstasy or beatification arising out of the vision of the Self or God is the highest ideal, metaphysically and epistemologically, psychologically and mystically, ethically and axiologically. This bliss of self-realization 'is as much above what is called happiness as happiness is above pleasure'.[2] The cardinal proposition of Beatificism is that 'Bliss is Brahman'. According to Ranade in the first step a saint "touches" Brahman (Brahma-Samspaŕśa) or comes into 'Direct contact and communion with Him'. The next step is the 'identification of the saint and the Brahman, leading to the highest bliss. The third and the final step are the 'identification of the blissful state itself with Brahman: Bliss is Brahman.'[3] The identification of happiness with Reality, the axiological conception of bliss and the metaphysical conception of Brahman are the same.' In his monumental work on the Upaniśads, Ranade says that it is the realization of the triune unity of the Infinite, I and the Ātman that leads to the enjoyment of the highest bliss. 'Great happiness is experienced when Infinite is seen above and below, before and behind, to the right and to the left, and is regarded as identical with everything that exists; when the Being that calls itself the I within is realized above and below, before and behind, to the right and to the left, and is regarded as identical with everything that exists; when the Ātman is seen above and below, before and behind, to the right and to the left and is regarded as identical with everything that exists. He who thus realizes the triune unity of the Infinite, the I and the Ātman, and experiences the truth of the sentence 'so aham asmi' is alone entitled to enjoy the highest happiness. He loves his Self, plays with his Self, enjoys the company of his Self, and revels in his Self.'[4] Mystical realization of bliss and enabling the rest of mankind to enjoy the same was the goal of Ranade's one-pointed endeavour.

## *The Mystical Nature of Reality*

Ranade emphasizes that the mystical view of Reality alone will enable us to reconcile all the intellectual dogmas that have infested

the philosophies of the world. 'It is a view of reality which regards the realization of Self or God as the be-all and end-all existence.' 'What we experience, what we feel and what we realize should alone constitute our philosophy.' God or Divine Self-consciousness alone constitutes the ultimate Reality; everything about God is miraculous; nobody has ever been able to know His ultimate nature. While referring to the 'bitter and prolonged argumentative battles being waged by the dualistic, quasi-monistic and monistic schools of Vedanta which respectively regard the Self as entirely distinct from the Absolute, as a part of the Absolute, and as entirely identical with the Absolute, Prof. Ranade says, 'mystic experience alone is a clue through the labyrinth and maze of the philosophic conflicts.' 'It is only in mystic experience that each school and each doctrine can have its appointed place and level.'[5]

Thus, according to Ranade Divine Self-consciousness is the ultimate Reality, the 'pivot and fulcrum' of all existence. The whole range of idealists from Berkeley downwards have made human Self-consciousness the be-all and end-all of the Reality, but Ranade substitutes in its stead, the Divine Self-consciousness, the Aristotelian Eternal Self-spectator engaged in blissful self-contemplation. Self-consciousness is the touchstone of all reality. 'God is not God unless He is identical with Self-consciousness. Existence is not existence if it does not mean Self-consciousness. Reality is not reality if it does not express throughout its structure the marks of pure Self-consciousness. Self-consciousness thus constitutes the ultimate category of existence.'[6] Though the ultimate is unknowable in His essential nature, He is not merely an object of faith as in Kant, but He is an object of mystical realization. Nor is the Self unknowable in the Spenserian sense. The Self is unknowable firstly from the standpoint of philosophic humility (*cognoscendo ignorari et ignorando cognosci*, Augustine), and secondly because of being the Eternal Subject who knows He cannot be an object of knowledge to another beside Him. But the Self has the power to dichotomize Himself and make Himself at once the knower and the known. Thus, 'Self-consciousness is possible, and is not only possible, but alone real.' Asserting that the 'empirical conditions of knowledge are

inapplicable to the Self', Ranade exposes 'the nudity of the doctrines of Kant and Comte when they try to deny the fact of introspection,' and establishes the reality of 'introspection as a psychological process corresponding to Self-consciousness as a metaphysical reality.' It is wonderful how Kant should have posited the 'I am I' as the supreme metaphysical category, which is called the transcendental, original and synthetic unity of apperception and yet should have denied the reality of the corresponding psychological process of introspection.'[7] Prof. Ranade thus posits what Aristotle called Theoria, the act of pure self-contemplation in which the Self is most mysteriously both the subject and the object of knowledge.

The Self must be regarded as the innermost existence. All the physiological and psychological elements are only external vestures that clothe the Self but do not constitute it. The ultimate Reality must not be mistaken with bodily consciousness, nor be confused with dream-consciousness. It is pure Self-consciousness that is of the nature of intuitive bliss. The true Self could only be the Self-conscious Being, shining in his own native light, thinking of nothing but his own though, the thought of Thought of Aristotle, the supreme theoretic Being, the eternal self-spectator.'[8]

## *The Truth is One, Error Infinite: Ephemeralism*

Divine Self is the only truth, and is Absolute, while the phenomenal and ephemeral world is infected with error and relativism. 'Truth is one, absolute and immutable and that is in God.'[9] Truth is one but error is infinite. Is then world real or unreal? The problems of reality and unreality of the world had led philosophers into insoluble controversies. If we limit ourselves to the Vedantic philosophers, we may say that while Ramānuja and Madhva represent the reality of the world, Śaṃkara stands for its unreality. Ranade makes the bold statement that 'the reconciling thread through these conflicting views of Madhva and Śaṃkara is the thread of God-realization', and gives us the doctrines of Ephemeralism. The things of the world are ephemeral or Vyakta Madhya. 'Behind them there is an infinity, before them is also infinity. They come into existence and depart in a short whole.

We cannot say that they do not exist. They exist but only for a short duration.' Carlyle said, 'A little while ago and you were not; a little after and you are not.' It is in this way that the antinomy of the reality and the unreality of the world are reconciled in ephemeral nature of the world.

## *Self-Realization: Its Ethical Aspect*

It is in the doctrine of Self-realization that metaphysics, morality and mysticism meet. The Self, which is the highest metaphysical reality, is also the *summum bonum* of man's moral and mystical endeavour. Self-realization does not have the same connotation for Ranade as it has for some contemporary moralists. 'What is meant by Self-realization is the unfoldment and visualization of the Ātman within me, instead of the insipid and soulless realization of the various faculties of man... in which sense some contemporary Moralists understand it.'[10] As we saw earlier, Self–realization is invariably connected with bliss. This bliss cannot be measured in terms of its own kind, absolutely *sui generis*. Self-realization thus means a vision of the Infinite, the attainment of the triune unity the I, the Self and Brahman. Ranade says that 'the Ātman being the very kernel of existence is nearmost to us' and so He 'ought to be the highest object of our desire, higher than any phenomenal object of love, such as progeny, wealth or the like.' Moreover, the Self is ought to be the highest object of desire because attainment of the Self makes us Āptakāma which is the supreme state of desirelessness, wherein no desires are left to be fulfilled. Lastly, the love that we bear to the wife or/the husband or the son is only an aspect of or a reflection of, the love we bear to the Self. It is in fact, for the sake of the Self that all these things become dear to us. So, this Self should be realized, and Self-realization constitutes the be-all and the end-all of the human life.

## *God-Devotion the Central Virtue*

Cultivation of virtues and shunning of vices is the essential pre-requisite of Self-realization. According to Ranade, God-love is the central virtue from which other important virtues flow. 'God-

love is the central virtue in which are focused all the virtues... and which illuminates them all. All virtues to deserve the name must merely be expressions, manifestations, or aspects of this central virtue, and all other vices only declarations or aberrations therefrom.' In his 'Pathway to God in Hindi Literature' he classifies virtues into individual, social and spiritual and propounds a synthetic doctrine of virtue by establishing God-devotion as the *fons et origo* of all virtues. Non-attachment, self-control, discrimination and patience are the chief individual virtues, sympathy and benevolence, chief social virtues, and study of philosophy reverential service to the teacher, meditation on the name and qualities of God, and divine optimism chief spiritual virtues. Now God-devotion implies non-attachment for everything except God; it will not become effective unless it has direction of discrimination, is preceded by self-control, and is accompanied by patient toil. God-love must manifest itself in sympathy to all human beings and issue in positive acts of beneficence to humanity, because God is in all men. Again,

our attachment to God presupposes adequate knowledge of the nature of God and reverential service to the Spiritual Teacher. God-love is reciprocally connected with meditation on the name and qualities of God, and generates in us God-centered optimism, 'which sees in every happening in history and in nature, the beck and call of God.'

## *Supermoralism*

In Ranade's doctrines of Self-realization moralism culminates in supermoralism since morality that serves as a pre-requisite to the unfoldment and visualization of the Self within us issues into supermoralism when the Self is realized by us. There is, however, a distinction between the supermoralism of Bradley and Nietzsche on the one hand, and the supermoralism of Ranade. 'Nietzsche's supermoralism affects only the superman who in his possession of absolute strength, defies and therefore rises above, all conceptions of good and bad. The Bradleyan supermoralism affects only the Absolute, which in its absoluteness is regarded as being beyond both good and bad.' But Ranade's supermoralism affects the individual as well as the Absolute. The Absolute, of course, is

beyond merit and demerit, and grows neither great by good actions nor small by evil actions. The individual moral agent who contemplates upon the Absolute also attains a like virtue when his greatness ceases to grow by good actions or diminish by bad action, and he goes beyond the reach of good and bad.

## *Self-realization: its mystical aspect*

When we consider the mystical sides of Self-realization and discuss the mysticism of Ranade, we come to the grand finale of his philosophy of God-realization. Ranade's metaphysics and ethics are but stepping-stones to his mysticism. In his view 'metaphysics, morality and mysticism are as inseparable from each other in the interests of the highest development of man, as intellect, will and emotion are inseparable for his highest psychological development'. 'Intelligence without the moral backbone might only degenerate into cleverest forms of chicanery, and a mystic without morality, if such a one is possible, might only be hideous creature who is a blot on the spiritual evolution of man. And again, just as morality, to be ratiocinative, must be firmly linked to intellect, similarly for its consummation, it must end in mystical attitude, which alone is the goal and end of the life of man.'[11] Mysticism is a term that has been widely misunderstood. It is identified with mysterious and occult phenomena; and paradoxical and/or aphoristic utterances are thought to be the surest indication of mysticism. Ranade gives a very lucid exposition of the true meaning of mysticism when he says, 'Mysticism denotes that attitude of the mind which involves a direct, immediate, first-hand, intuitive apprehension of God. It signifies the highest attitude of which a man is capable, namely a restful and loving contemplation of God, a beatific contemplation of God and its dissemination in the society and the world.'[12]

## *The faculty of intuition*

Mystical experience of God involves the faculty of intuition, which is 'a faculty of supersensuous experience' and 'is aroused by proper spiritual initiation and practice'.[13] Intuition rises above intellect, feeling and will, though it involves them all. In his book

on the Bhavadgitā, Ranade compares his concept of institution with Rudolf Otto's Idea of the Holy. For Otto, the Idea of the Holy is a category wholly *sui generis* and rises above the conceptions of the True, the Good and the Beautiful. For Ranade, intuition is a category *sui generis*, which cannot be reduced to intellect, feeling and will, and 'rises on top of Pure Reason, Practical Reason and Judgment' of Kant. Intuition as the faculty of God-realization is supersensuous. While all our moral experience is connected with our sensuous nature, mystic experience transcends the senses so that as Sūrdās says 'a blind man can see all.' From the point of view of physiology, intuition is a matter of central initiation that is opposed to peripheral initiation. In the words of Ranade, 'It is not anything impinging upon our senses from the outside that constitutes beatific experience, it is something which comes from inside. As psychologists of mystical experience are aware, the visions which the mystic sees, the sounds that he hears, the smells that he enjoys and so on, are not drawn from the outside world. They come from within. They are centrally initiated.'[14]

## *The functions of spiritual teacher*

According to Ranade, meditation by means of a Name imparted by a realized spiritual teacher is the only way to God-realization. The knowledge of the Self is so subtle and mystic that mere individual effort is of no avail. The Kathopaniṣad says, 'Arise, awake, and learn from those who are better than ye; for the path of realization is as hard to tread as the edge of a razor - very wisely called an inaccessible path by the sages.' [15] 'Spiritual knowledge descends from a higher level to a lower one' according to what Ranade calls 'the law of Spiritual Gravitation.'[16] The knowledge imparted by the worthy spiritual teacher, standing on the lofty pedestal of unitive experience, alone can fructify in an individual. Books cannot be a substitute for spiritual teacher in the matter of Self-realization, because whereas the spiritual teacher imparts living knowledge backed by a life-time of realization and solves the actual difficulties of the aspirant experienced by him in path of Self-realization, books give knowledge which is lifeless and are

not capable of solving any difficulties of the aspirant. The Name given by the spiritual teacher is alpha and the omega of the spiritual life; it is ladder by means of which we might reach God. Not every Name of God will, however, enable the seeker to have the vision of God. 'It is only the Name which an aspirant might receive from his spiritual teacher who has reached the heights of spiritual realization that can be of any avail in this matter. The real Name is the Name which fructifies.'[17] The meditation on the Name is to be done with devotion, concentrated attention and unobstructed effort for a direct and first hand experience of God.

Ranade's methodology of meditation may be described in five stages. In the first place, meditation on the Name is to be done silently and internally, through the medium of breath rather than the tongue. Secondly, meditation should be characterized by intense concentration. As the Mundakopaniśad puts it, 'the mystic symbol Õm is the bow; the arrow is the soul; and Brahman the mark to be pierced. We should penetrate it with undistracted attention, so that the arrow may become one with the mark.'[18] The remaining three characteristics of the meditational process, namely, dïrghakāla, nairantarya and satkāra imply that a man should continue his meditation to the end of his life, utilize every breath of life in its service, and accomplish it in the spirit of devotion.[19] Ranade, however, lays utmost emphasis on the passionate longing of the aspirant for the realization of God and says, that 'it is this inner urge, this one-pointed and passionate search, this life of consecration to the ideal, which crowns the efforts of man for the attainment of God.'[20]

## *Criteria of Mystical Experience*

The meditational process gives rise to different varieties of mystical experience in the supersensuous Anāhata (unstruck) sound, brilliant light, taste and fragrance and spiritual bath which are the auricular, ocular, gustatory, olfactory and other manifestations of God. These supersensuous visions and auditions are truly the vehicles of God-realization. Prof. Ranade has very carefully formulated the manifold criteria to judge the authenticity of mystical experiences. First of all, a genuine mystical experience

is intuitive and supersensuous in nature: it springs from within or is centrally initiated. Secondly, continuity and growth should characterize a true mystical experience. 'If it comes in a while and leaves you off, and if you do not get it again and again, it is no spiritual experience at all. This continuity is also attended by the process of growth. We should not be idle or rest content merely with intuitive experience we have; that experience must grow from day to day and from year to year, and the ultimate result of the growth of this kind of supersensuous experience would be a sort of an asymptotic approximation to Reality.'[21] Taking his cue from the great saint, Jñāneśvara, Ranade propounds the doctrine of asymptotic realization. 'The hyperbole never meets the asymptote, but goes on approaching it continually and meets it at infinity.' Similarly, an aspiring mystic goes on asymptotically approaching God, and is able to meet Him at infinity. This doctrine is implied in the statement of Jñāneśvara that there is difference between even the highest Sādhaka and God. Thirdly, a genuine mystical experience must issue in beatification or bliss. It is beatification that constitutes the ultimate and binds the community of mystics together. Fourthly, there should be a perfect parity between the internal and external perceptions of God. If there is internal perception to which nothing external corresponds, it may be a case of imagination, hallucination or illusion. If, on the other hand, there is something external to which internal corresponds, then it cannot be, evidently, a case of supersensuous experience and may be ultimately unreal.'[22] Fifthly, mystical experience must lead to an intellectual clarification of thought. Ranade says, that 'a man who aspires after mystical life must have a penetrating and unfaltering intellect; he must have a powerful philosophic imagination. Accurate intellectual thought among other things, which will compel philosophical assent and admiration, is a sure accompaniment of mystical experience.' 'It is not without reason that great mystics like Śaṃkaracārya and Yājñāvalkya, Jñāneśvara and Kabira have produced the great intellectual works that have lived after.'[23] Sixthly, mystical experience 'must have a capacity for the definite moral improvement of the individual and society.' Quoting Plotinus, Ranade says, 'The vision is not to be regarded as unfruitful. In this state the perfect soul begets like God Himself

– beautiful thoughts and beautiful virtues.' Moreover, in his opinion, a mystic does a supreme service to humanity by calling its attention from moment to moment to the perfection and greatness of God. There have been mystics, who, like Aristotle's God, have moved the world by their divine contemplation. Unmoved themselves, they have become men of a world-shaking type.' Seventhly, a life of refined, pure and 'Deiform' emotions is almost a *sine qua non* of mystical experience. In fact, no mystical experience is possible unless we have a plenitude of finer emotions, all turned to the experience of God. When Spinoza said that emotions must be transmuted into an intellectual love of God, he said most accurately what is needed in true life of Mysticism. Eighthly, no mystical experience can be real, unless at the same time, it is universal. Mystics all over the world irrespective of race, nationality, age or sex have the same teaching about the name of God, the fire of devotion, the nature of Self-realization. Says Prof. Ranade, 'It is this element of universality which Kant contends, would confer upon mystical experience objectivity, necessity and validity.' Lastly, 'the surest criterion of mysticism is the reality of the experience as enjoyed by the mystic himself. It is known only to him and his Maker. Before it, there is no appeal; for it there is no criterion. It is this personal-divine aspect of a mystic's spiritual realization, which stamps it with a peculiar halo and worth. It is in this sense that mystical experience has been regarded as inferable.'

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# *Mysticism and Logic*

In the present chapter it will be our endeavour to examine the arguments advanced by Bertrand Russell against the fundamental principles of Mysticism in his classic essay on "Mysticism and Logic" which was published almost a century ago[1]. Russell's essay is characteristic of his ambivalent attitude towards Mysticism. Even while he tries to expose the logical fallacies in philosophies based on Mysticism, he acknowledges the value of Mysticism as an inalienable factor that accounts for greatness in philosophy. At the very outset he says that Metaphysics or the attempt to conceive the world as a whole by means of thought has been developed by the union and conflict of two very different human impulses, the one urging man towards Mysticism, the other urging them towards science. But he is frank enough to admit that, "the greatest men who have been philosophers have felt the need both of science and mysticism." He cites an illustration of the philosophies of Heraclitus and Plato in which mystical as well as scientific tendencies are found commingled, making them great feats of human thought. He further opines that "the true union of the mystic and the man of science is the highest eminence.... that is possible to achieve in the world of thought."

Russell then enumerates four beliefs, which in his opinion characterises mystical philosophy in all ages and in all parts of the world. The first belief of the mystic is that Intuition as against Reason is the only sure means of knowing the Reality lying behind the world of appearances. The second characteristic of mysticism is the mystic's belief in unity, and its refusal to admit opposition or division anywhere. Parmenides, for instance, asserts that reality is one and indivisible. A third belief of the mystical meta-physician is regarding the unreality of Time. If all is one the distinction of the past and future must be illusory. The fourth and the last belief of the mystic is that evil is mere appearance. The sense of unity creates a feeling of infinite peace in the mystic.

Russell thinks that though on all these four points "mysticism seems to me to be mistaken," yet "there is an element of wisdom to be learned from the mystic way of feeling, which does not seem to be attainable in any other manner." He commends mysticism "as an attitude towards life, not as a creed about the world." In his view, the metaphysical creed "is a mistaken outcome of the emotion." He even goes further in acknowledging the value of mysticism when he says that "even the cautious and patient investigation of truth by science..... may be fostered and nourished by that very spirit of reverence in which mysticism lives and moves."[2]

Now, before we proceed further and examine Russell's arguments with respect to the above mentioned four beliefs associated with mysticism, it may be pointed out by us that the learned philosopher's characterization of Mysticism as "in essence little more than a certain intensity and depth of feeling in regard to what is believed about the universe," is so narrow that it almost falsifies the true nature of mysticism. As Prof. R.D.Ranade, the great philosopher-mystic has said, "Mysticism denotes that attitude of mind that involves a direct, immediate, first-hand, intuitive apprehension of God." As such, mysticism is primarily noetic or gnostic in nature. It gives a direct insight into Reality because the mystic is in immediate, almost cataclysmic contact with it. Though mystic experience involves the whole being of mystic in its intellective, emotional and volitional aspects, yet it is the intellective aspect of seeing God face to face which can be said to be its very essence because emotions and volitions get meaning and justification only with reference to the vision of God. If the vision of God is absent, mere depth and intensity of feeling may inspire poetry, but poetry is after all no philosophy. Thus, Russell's view about feeling alone constituting the "essence" of mysticism is mistaken, to say the least!

When Russell comes to discuss the mystic's belief in Intuition as the faculty that alone can give him a direct insight into Reality, he contrasts Intuition with Reason or Intellect. He assumes all the while that from the mystic's viewpoint, Intuition is opposed to Intellect. Moreover, he links Intuition to the animal instinct when

he criticizes Bergson's views in this context. But as a matter of fact Intuition is not at all opposed to intellect. Intuition so far from contradicting Intelligence, Feeling and Will, does penetrate and lie at the back of them all. Even Russell himself maintains that "the opposition of instinct and reason is mainly illusory. Instinct, intuition or insight is what first leads to the beliefs which subsequent reason confirms or confutes." He goes further in praising the role of Intuition when he says that "even in the most purely logical realm it is insight that first arrives at what is new." But while criticizing Bergson's view that it is not Intellect but Intuition which apprehends the uniqueness and novelty which always belong to each fresh moment, Russell argues that the knowledge of what is unique and novel can be only given by direct acquaintance. It is fully given in sensation and does not require any special faculty of Intuition for its apprehension. When Russell identifies "direct acquaintance" with "sensation", he presumes that senses alone are capable of giving us direct knowledge. But mystics hold that it is the super-sensuous Intuition that aquaints them directly with God. When the faculty of Intuition is aroused in a blind man like Suradas, he is able to "see all". Russell appears to be unmindful if not ignorant of the super-sensuous experiences of mystics the world over when he opines that only sensation can give us direct acquaintance with unique and novel facts. Even the Intellect or Reason when backed by intuition becomes unerringly and unfalteringly capable of penetrating the heart of Reality. Plato, Śaṃkara, and Spinoza could give us great systems of philosophy which compel intellectual assent, because their intellect was backed by intuition. It may be noted in this context that the affinity between the animal instinct and Intuition asserted by Russell is again mistaken. Animal instinct is blind, mechanical and competent only in customary surroundings. In contrast, Intuition is insightful and *sui generis*, and competent to grasp the unique and the novel.

Coming to the second belief of the mystics regarding the unity and oneness of all things, Russell believes that it is based on faulty logic but instead of explaining the logical defects he is content with hinting at the state of mind from which mystical logic has arisen. He again opines that it is in certain moods that the mystic

comes to believe that reality is quite different from what appears to the senses. It is these moods which are the source of most mysticism and of most metaphysics. When his mood or the intensity of emotional conviction subsides, the mystic devises some logical paradoxes to support it. Therefore, the logic put forth by the mystics is incapable of giving any account of the world of science and daily life. In Russell's view, the mystics are less anxious to understand the world of science and daily life than to convict it of unreality in the interests of super-sensible real world. Following Santayana, he says that the logic of mysticism is inherently "malicious". The logic of mysticism is not disinterested in its attitude but is motivated by hatred towards the world of science and daily life with the result that it is dubbed as being illusory.

When Russell says that the logic and philosophy devised by mystics is a sort of justification of their mystical experience, he is quite on the right lines. Experience and the conviction born of it are the basis of any philosophy, whether it is idealistic or realistic, monistic or pluralistic, mystical or (per Russell) scientific. As Prof. Ranade has put it, "What we experience, what we feel and what we realize should alone constitute our philosophy."[3] In other words, any philosophy is an intellectual construction which tries to explain and justify logically the philosopher's own experience. This is no peculiarity of metaphysics or mysticism, as Russell tries to make out. When he himself advocates the reality of the world of science and daily life and tries to build a realistic philosophy, he is also justifying his experience of plurality and nothing more. His experience limits him to the world of sense, and existence of the supersensuous reality is incompatible with his conviction born of his limited experience. From the side of mysticism, he may also be accused of entertaining a malice or hatred towards the supersensuous reality and of inventing a logic which dubs it as a product of the mood or the intense emotion of the mystic.

However, leaving aside the charge of maliciousness or hatred, we have to dedicate ourselves to the search for truth. Truth will reveal itself if we were objective enough to give at least an equal

weight to the experience of mystic with the experience of the man of commonsense. What St. Tukārāma says, "Deep has called unto deep and all things have vanished into unity. The waves and ocean have become one. Nothing can come, and nothing can pass away. The Self is enveloping Himself all round," we should be ready to give it as much credence to the fact of his mystic experience as we are expected to give to the commonsense experience. After such experience of unity and God-possession, Tukārāma tells us, "My previous outlook has been entirely changed on account of new possession. I find no life in worldly life. A new possession of the soul has taken place. The former outlook has changed. My life has been filled with divine joy."[4]

This statement by Saint Tukārāma regarding his mystic experience and consequent change in his outlook forcing him to consider the worldly life as worthless and illusory makes it abundantly clear that the mystics pronouncement about the unreality of the world of sense is not inspired by malice. Again, it would not be out of place in this context to recall the philosopher-mystic Śri Śaṃkaracārya's view about the status of the world of sense. According to him, the sense-world is not illusory in the sense in which the son of a barren woman is non-existent. It is existent, but it is ephemeral as is vouchsafed even by the experience of the common man. That the empirical world of plurality is a passing-show is again brought home to us when we rise to the level of the Brahmjňani. From that highest viewpoint the world is seen in its real nature as Brahman. Just as the innumerable waves subside in the waters of the ocean in the absence of the wind, similarly with the rise of Brahma-jňana, the world with its plurality merges in Brahman. The Reality or Brahman is not a unity or an organic whole as Russell believes, but it is unique and can be described only negatively as non-dual (advaya). Unity and plurality are both out of reckoning in mystical view of Reality.

Russell's response to what he calls the third belief of the mystics is markedly ambivalent, though his ambivalence is visible with respect to the whole problem of mysticism. The third belief is concerning the unreality of Time, which again, according to

Russell is rooted in "the certainty which is born in the moment of mystic insight." He says that the arguments given by mysticism for the unreality of time must be regarded as fallacious, and yet he thinks that there is a sense in which "time is an unimportant and superficial characteristic of reality. Past and future must be acknowledged to be as real as the present, and a certain emancipation from slavery to time is essential to philosophic thought. The importance of time is rather practical than theoretical, rather in relation to our desires than in relation to truth."[5] Here Russell's views regarding the status of time are nothing but a paraphrase of the Advaitic view that time is only empirically real (i.e., it has only a 'practical' or vyāvhārika importance), but transcendentally unreal (i.e., it is unimportant from 'theoretical' or pāramārthika view point). He even goes on to remark that "to realize the unimportance of time is the gate of wisdom." With a little reflection, it dawns upon us that there is no "intrinsic" difference of quality between past and future. The felt difference in quality in past and future is "only with reference to us" but, "to impartial contemplation, it ceases to exist."

While propounding his view that emancipation from slavery to time is essential for disinterested pursuit of philosophic truth, Russell criticizes the votaries of philosophy of Evolutionism such as Herbert Spencer who regard organic evolution as "progressive" or as a " process of change from the worse to better." He says that the "notion of progress" imposed on the Darwinian theory of Evolution by Herbert Spencer and others amounts to a surrender to the tyranny of the notion of time which is injurious to the impartiality of philosophic contemplation. In short, though Russell is not in favour of the total denial of the reality of time, he wishes "to preserve the mental outlook which inspired the denial." It is obvious that Russell wants to have the cake and at the same time he wishes to eat it as well.

In the end, Russell considers the fourth belief of the mystics that all evil is illusry and that all reality is good. He further refers to the views of Heraclitus and Spinoza who take a two-fold position regarding the meaning of good with reference to human beings and with reference to God. From the human viewpoint, things of

sense-world are good and evil, but from the divine viewpoint all things are fair and good and right. Russell thinks that a truly scientific philosophy should not impose human concern for good and evil on the Reality. The search for truth should be disinterested and unconcerned with hope of good and fear of evil. The universe is understood in its true nature only when the philosopher approaches it without any preconceived notion of its being friendly or hostile to the interests of man.

In this connection it may be emphasized that Mysticism does not pre-judge the nature of the world, as Russell thinks. Mystics have always shown their readiness to sacrifice everything for the sake of fearless pursuit of Reality. When Jesus Christ called upon the devotees to "Leave away thy father and mother and follow me", he exhorted them to give up everything dear to them for the sake of attaining the Kingdom of God. Plotinus said that the vision of God is not for the selfish and week, but for those who have enough strength of the spirit to brave the hazards of the upward ascent. Kabira stood in the market-place with a flaming torch in his hand and declared that those alone, who are prepared to set their house on fire should accompany him in search of God. Preetama, the Gujarati saint tells us that the path of God is the path of the extraordinarily brave in spirit. Spinoza, the philosopher-mystic pursued his philosophy despite his ex-communication from the Jewish Synagogue and paid his way through life by grinding lenses. Śaṃkara renounced the world even while he was in Brahmaćarya stage of life, the very moment he felt disgusted with it. Thus, instances can be multiplied to drive home the point that Mysticism does not believe in imposing human notions of good on the Reality. However, when the mystic, after passing through trials and travails of spiritual life, realizes God, he finds the life in God as full of bliss and peace. Śaṃkara finds that the Brahman is not simply full of bliss, but is Bliss Itself. So when the mystics pronounce that Reality is good in the highest sense, their pronouncement is backed by their direct experience. Their judgment is objective par excellence. There is nothing like imagination subjective wish- fulfillment in it.

In conclusion, we may recall that Russell regards the mystical and the scientific tendencies as being so different in nature that there is a sort of conflict between them. Throughout his essay he builds up the opposition between mysticism and science. Mysticism is a mood or an intense feeling, but science is rational. Mysticism is metaphysical, but science is factual. Mysticism always has its eye on unity or wholeness, but science works piecemeal. Mysticism is uncritical and hasty, but science is critical and cautious. Underlying this opposition between mysticism and science is the basic assumption of Russell that while mysticism represents feeling and emotion, science represents perceptual knowledge and discursive reason. But as has been pointed out above, mysticism is not feeling or emotion. It is primarily an intuitive insight that is cognitive in nature. For any great achievement in science, intuitive insight is needed. All fruitful scientific hypotheses are the works of the intuitive insight of great scientists. It may further be noted that insights are not the accidental mood of the scientist, but a great deal of plodding, acquisition of knowledge, disciplined thinking and contemplation are necessary for their emergence. Much perspiration lies at the back of every inspiration. Thus, progress in the knowledge of Reality is made possible by the cooperation of intellect and intuition. Years of intellectual preparation is necessary for the emergence of intuitive insight, and intuitive insight in its turn gives the direction in which further intellectual work should proceed so as to prepare the ground for new insights.

Mysticism that stands for intuitive insight, and Logic that is affiliated to discursive intellect, are therefore, not in conflict with each other. They reciprocally assist each other in man's search for Reality. Greatness in Science, Philosophy, Art and Literature is achieved when mystic intuition penetrates and supports the intellect.

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# *Moral and Religious Obligations*

The relation between moral and religious obligations can be viewed from two different standpoints, namely, (1) the standpoint of moralism, and (2) the standpoint of super-moralism. According to the standpoint of moralism, moral life and religious life are distinct phases of the complex human life. They have their own separate spheres and different motivations, obligations and aims. This standpoint is generally adopted by thinkers who insist on the autonomy of morality. In contrast to this, there is the standpoint of supermoralism adopted by mystics and saints who lead a life of God- intoxication wherein morality and religion with their respective obligations are at once subsumed and transcended in a life totally dedicated to the love of God and relief of man's estate.

Morality is rooted in the reflective nature of man. As distinguished from an animal, man can reflect on himself as one member among other members who constitute the class of human beings, and can bifurcate himself into actual self and ideal self. As such, he feels duty-bound to give such weight to the claims of other persons as are equal to his own. This obligation involving self-denial in his social relations is paralleled by his obligation to deny the satisfactions of his lower actual self in order to fulfill the claims of his higher ideal self in the context of his personal life. This sense of obligation to look beyond one's own self to the needs of others as also to sacrifice the desires of the actual self for the sake of realization of ideal self can be said to be the quintessence of all moral life. As Brandt has rightly pointed out, "peculiarly ethical questions about 'what is right or wrong, what is our duty, what is our obligation, what we ought to do, what is immoral conduct, can be correctly viewed as, at least approximately, questions about moral obligation."[1]

Ethical philosophers have discussed the problem of moral obligation with a view to answering two different questions. One of these questions pertains to the motivation of the sense of moral

obligation, while the other is concerned with giving a justification for moral obligation. As regards motivations for performing one's duty, they may be prudential or impulsively altruistic. Bentham thought that sources of motivation are entirely external viz., physical, social, political and religious. He explained that man is governed by two "grand objects" viz., pleasure and pain, which alone have the power to "fashion" his behaviour, and that "there are four distinguishable sources from which pleasure and pain ...., they may be termed the physical, the political, the moral, the and religious and inasmuch as the pleasures and pains belonging to each of them are capable of giving a binding force to any law or rule of conduct, they may all of them be termed as sanctions."[2] Concerning the moral sanction, he clarified in a note that it signifies merely the "popular" or "public opinion" as a source of pleasure and pain.' Mill agreed with Bentham not only with respect to the ultimate motive-power of pleasure and pain but also commended the four external sanctions as sources of moral obligation. But he went further and talked of the internal sanction of duty. "The internal sanction of duty whatever our standard of duty may be, is one and the same- a feeling in our own mind; a pain, more or less intense, attendant on violation of duty."[3] Mill identifies this "feeling" with what he calls the "Conscience", which as the ultimate sanction of all morality has a "binding force" and is the essence of moral obligation.

However, moral obligation may be motivated by another over-riding consideration apart from - prudence or natural sympathy. Kant insisted that an action can be morally good only when it is motivated by a desire or will to do what is right. As he put it in his ***Lectures on Ethics,*** "The morality of an action is quite peculiar thing : there is a distinct difference between a moral act and any pragmatic or pathological action... If our conduct as free agents is to have moral goodness, it must proceed solely from a good will."[4] This means that so far as rational beings are concerned, their actions may be motivated by the understanding that they are intrinsically right. In this context, Sidgwick also held that "a man's belief that a certain action which is in his power is right is a motive for doing it."[5] Sidgwick's further remark that we experience a "feeling of moral obligation" when this motive for

doing what is intrinsically right comes in conflict with other prudential inclinations is very significant. According to him, the feeling of oughtness or moral obligation can appropriately arise only when there are motives and inclinations against doing the rightest action open to the agent. The notion of ought "would seem to be inappropriate to a being who is supposed to have no inclinations to do what is wrong or to leave undone what is right."[6]

We now come to the problem of justification of moral obligation. Why should one do things which one feels one is under obligation to do? Two types of answers have been given to this question by moral philosophers in justification of the sense of moral obligation. On one hand, some philosophers hold that the ultimate criterion of doing what is morally obligatory is that such an action is conducive to some non-moral good. As Frankena puts it, "An act ought to be done if and only if it will produce a greater balance of good over evil than any available alternative."[7] These philosophers subscribe to some form of Teleological theory which tries to justify a morally obligatory action in terms of some non-moral value such as happiness, perfection, self-realization etc. Plato, Mill and Moore, for instance, uphold some form of Teleologism. On the other hand, there are philosophers who contend that the only justification for doing a morally-obligatory action is that that action is right or good in itself. These philosophers subscribe to some Deontological theory that denies that a morally obligatory action can be justified in terms of its consequences, which have non-moral value. A morally obligatory action or the principle of that action is intrinsically good; it needs no justification on non-moral grounds. Kant, Ross and Prichard stand for some form of Deontologism or the other. Kant's doctrine of duty for duty's sake is an exemplary Deontological theory. As Prichard puts it, "The sense of obligation, or of the rightness of an action is absolutely underivative or immediate."[8] Just as the apprehension that this three-sided figure must have three angles is immediate, similarly the obligation to pay our debts is felt immediately. Thus, Prichard stands for Deontological Intuitionism.

We have discussed the problem of moral obligation from the standpoint of what we have called moralism. Now from this standpoint, religious obligation stands on a different footing. Moral obligation is rooted in the reflective nature of man, but religious obligation has its source in prior religious beliefs and commitments fostered by the scriptures held to be sacred by an individual professing a certain religion. A Christian for instance, believes in the divine revelation of the Ten Commandments, hence he feels bound to follow them. Similar is the case with the sense of religious -obligation experienced by a Jew, a Muslim or a Hindu. They are committed to follow the scriptural instructions and rituals associated with the religion professed by them so as to avoid the wrath of God or banishment to hell that might follow when religious commandments are disobeyed. Apart from the beliefs fostered by holy scriptures, the religious ideals exemplified by incarnations and venerable prophets, and religious goals and values accepted by an individual belonging to a particular religion also create obligations to conform to those ideals, goals and values. When great warrior of Mahabharat, Arjuna shrinks back from fighting his enemies who happened to be his own kith and kin, Lord Krşna, apart from reminding him of his duties as a "Kshatriya (warrior)" also tells him that flight from the battlefield was "*anāryajustama* (not the way of respectable), *asvargyam* (not lead to heaven) and *akirtikarama* (only earn you a bad name)."[9] In other words, Arjuna is told that his refusal to fight was not only something in contravention of the ideals and values cherished by the Āryas but was also likely to debar him from a place in the heavens and thereby tarnish his reputation.

Let us now discuss the problem of relation between moral obligation and religious obligation from the standpoint of what we have termed as Supermoralism. This is the standpoint of mystics, saints and the God-intoxicated persons. In this connection, we need only to recall to our mind the devotee mentioned by the Bhagvadgitā who being in unison with God (*Yogayuktātma)* sees his self in every being and also sees every being in his self. Having realized the identity of his self with God, he sees God wherever his eye is cast.[10] Round about him is moving the Brahman; if he looks ahead of himself, he sees God; if he looks behind, he sees

God. In like manner does St. Tukārama speak about his vision of God inside, outside, to the left, to the right, above, below and everywhere. As Prof. Ranade, the great philosopher-mystic, says, "The Bhagavadgītā exalts mystical experience above the knowledge of the Vedas. It tells us that we ought to rate the scriptures only for what they are worth, whether they be Hindu, Mohammedan or Christian Scriptures. They are all alike. They are like a small well (*udapana*) in the all-enveloping sea of the Ātman."[11] For such a mystic, moral and religious life becomes merged in the Ātmanic life. Devotion to the Ātman, Spirit or God becomes the be-all and the end-all of his life. As such, Prof. Ranade, like St. Augustine before him, has regarded love of God (Bhakti) as the central virtue from which all other so-called moral virtues like Compassion, Equanimity, Purity, Harmlessness, Self-control, Non-attachment, Fearlessness, Peace, Valour etc. flow automatically. The vision of God in all beings leads to the realization of the equality of all, the love for all, compassion for all, spirit of harmlessness towards all, purification of oneself, self-control, non-attachment to Godless things, peace of mind and fearlessness. Prof. Ranade says, "The supreme value of God-realization for oneself is to create conditions for the realization of God for himself and for others." Thus, a mystic is also of supreme service to humanity. In his life, Divine moralism finds its culmination in supermoralism and the "Good will" is transmuted into "Holy will" wherein the customary constraints associated with ordinary moral and religious life give way to spontaneous fulfillment of duties, both moral and religious. The mystic rises above all Karmas and Dharmas. It is in this sense that Sri Krşna asks us to rise superior to all Dharmas, to all duties and all religions and to meditate on Him. "*Sarva dharmān parityajya māmekam sharnam vraja*"[12] From the view-point of a mystic, God being the All-doer (*Sakalakartā*), whatever he does is really done by God. That prince among the saints of Mahārāshtra, Samartha Rāmadāsa says in the epilogue of his tremendously powerful spiritual treatise, the "**Dāsabodha**" that it has been written by gracious God through his instrumentality.[13] Thus, we conclude that not only do the moral obligation and religious obligation become non-distinct in the beatific life of the spirit but they also

lose their sting of obligatoriness in the effortless spontaneous performance of actions by the mystic.

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# *Mysticism and Moral Philosophy of Plotinus*

Plotinus was a God-intoxicated philosopher. His ethical ideas are saturated by the spirit of Mysticism that connotes a direct, first-hand contact with Reality. He gives us a moral philosophy which is but an expression of the life Divine led by him. It follows as a logical corollary from the mystical metaphysics propounded in the Enneads. According to his metaphysics, the **One or the Good** is the only reality which is indescribable. The Good is identical with God who is all-perfect. God in his perfection overflows as if and there comes into being the Intellectual Principle, the Cosmic Soul, the individual Souls and the world of Matter. Plotinus pictures the Good as the central light which becomes weaker and weaker as it emanates and ultimately disappears into darkness at the farthest limit. It is the farthest limit that is called the Matter which is of the nature of Non-Being as opposed to the Good which is of the nature of Being. Matter is also inherently evil. Thus, as Plotinus says, the Evil is "haunting this world by necessary Law."[1]

In this metaphysical scheme, man as an individual should hold an "intermediate rank" because he exists "midway between gods and beasts". Though men are not born Divine, yet "man is a noble creation, as perfect as the scheme allows. He holds a lot higher than that of all the other living beings of earth".[2] Man's soul which is inherently like God has fallen from its heights to the level of Matter which is the source of all Evil. As such "soul's design is to escape from Evil" which has accrued to it due to its contact with material body. "The soul is evil by being interfused with the body and its passions." It is by the cultivation of virtue that man can free his soul from bodily evils. According to Plotinus, "the way of virtue" is veritably the way of "purification", which restores to the soul its original "likeness to God".

It is against the background of this metaphysical nature, absolutely antithetical, that the moral philosophy of Plotinus

emerges in bold relief. The Soul which has fallen from God has become associated with the body which is alien to its nature. "Disengagement from the body" and the pursuit of an upward path, leading ultimately to the reunion of the soul with God is the supreme end of human life. Plotinus emphasizes that man's highest good lies not merely in sinlessness by dissociating his soul from the evils of the body, but it consists in attaining to the Godhead. "Our concern not to be sinless but to be God..... At height, man is the very being that came from the Supreme. The Primal excellence restored, the essential man is there: entering in this sphere he has associated himself with the reasoning phase of his nature and this will lead up to likeness with his higher Self."[3]

In this context, Plotinus depicts the ideal of a perfect Life to which a man ought to aspire. The perfect Life is the life of "likeness to God". All other forms of life are incomplete, are ugly phantoms, imperfect and impure. Perfect life is within human reach because every man "potentially" possesses that life. Man realizes perfect life when he commands the life of Reason and Authentic Intellection. At this lofty level, virtue takes the form of Wisdom " which consists in the contemplation of all that exists in the Intellectual-Principle, and as the immediate presence of the Intellectual-Principle itself."[5] Plotinus says that there are definite 'signs' by which we can recognize that the state of perfection has been achieved by any person. Absolute desirelessness is the natural sign of a person having attained perfection. "This is the very spirit in which the Upaniśadic Sage Yājñāvalkya having realized the Brahman (*āptakāma*) becomes bereft of all desires (*akāma*). Secondly, the Sage who has attained perfection is no longer the "complement of this body" and as such he can not only be disengaged from the body but also becomes capable of disdaining its normal goods.[6] Thirdly, the perfect man lessens and reduces his body so that his Soul may shine forth or that the veritable man who was hidden behind appearance of the body may show forth. Lastly, the perfected Sage experiences unmixed happiness because he "draws his good from the Supreme." As Plotinus further puts it, "Plato rightly taught that he who is to be wise and to possess happiness draws his good from the Supreme, fixing his gaze on That, becoming like That, living by That." This

reminds of the Brahma-Yogi of the Bhagvadgitā who experiences unending bliss within himself because remaining unattached to the external contacts of sense-objects he becomes attached to Brahm-Yoga.[7]

In the moral Philosophy of Plotinus, God occupies the central position in two important senses. In one sense, God is the fountainhead of all goodness and beauty. God or "the Good is the First : directly deriving from this First is the Intellectual-Principle which pre-eminently the manifestation of Beauty; through the Intellectual-Principle Soul is beautiful. The beauty in things is of a lower order - actions and pursuits for instance – comes by operation of the shaping Soul which is also the author of the beauty found in world of sense."[7] Thus, it is clear that all beauty and goodness ultimately flow from God. In the second sense, a man can attain virtue, goodness and beauty only through God-realization. Plotinus had the boldness to make God-realization as the central virtue from which all other virtues can be derived. As he puts it, "And it is just to say that in the Soul's becoming like God, for from the Divine comes all, the beauty and all other Good in beings".[8] In this regard, he tries to show that all important virtues flow necessarily from the central virtue of Wisdom. Wisdom or the state of Intellection as the central virtue consists in having a vision of God or the Good. This Wisdom frees the Soul from all bodily evils, thus generating the other virtues of Temperance, Fortitude and Righteousness. Temperance or Sophrosyne is the virtue of remaining unaffected by passions of the body; Fortitude consists in remaining fearless at the parting from the body; and Righteousness is the virtue of submitting oneself to the rule of Reason and Intellectual-Principle which is the manifestation of the supreme Godhead. The Soul's true good lies in devotion to the Intellectual-Principle that is its kin. But when it is alienated from the Intellectual-Principle and frequents strangers i.e., the body and its material pleasures, it contracts evil. Plotinus expresses this idea by saying that "a Soul becomes ugly by something foisted upon it, by sinking itself into the alien, by fall, a descent into body, into Matter." Gold is degraded when it is mixed with earthly particles, but it regains its original purity and

beauty when it is isolated from those particles. Even so the Soul that becomes ugly due to its intimate converse with bodily passions and desires regains its native goodness and beauty the moment it is purged of all that embodiment had thrust upon it. "Soul thus cleansed is all Idea and Reason, wholly free of body, intellectine, entirely of that divine order from which the well-spring of Beauty rises and all the race of Beauty."

Plotinus time and again emphasizes the metaphysical, mystical and moral significance of that concept of Good or God. To quote his own words, "The Good is that on which all else depends, towards which all existence aspires as to their source and their need, while Itself is without need, sufficient to Itself, aspiring to no other, the measure and Term of all, giving out from Itself the Intellectual-Principle and Existence, and Soul and Life and all Intellectual-Act." As we have already seen all the vice and ugliness of the Soul arises from its contact with Matter and body. Therefore, the Soul must ascend again towards the Good.

This ascent towards the Good is the desired of every Soul. The Soul has to take the upward path, and for this purpose it has to cast off all heavy burden that it acquired by its contact with Matter during its descent. Only when we have laid aside everything material and sensuous through a process of purification we will be able to set off for the upward flight, Our Soul has to approach God in entire nakedness and solitude because God Himself is the solitary-dwelling Existence, the Apart, the Unmingled, the Pure, "that from which all things depend, for Which all look and live and act and know, the Source of Life and Intellection and of Being." The Soul must hunger for the vision of God with a passionate longing to melt itself in that vision. The Vision is beautiful beyond description and it fills the Soul with the antithetical emotions of awe and gladness, terror and love. He who has attained this vision can be said to have gained ultimate success, while he who has failed to do so has failed utterly. "For not he that has failed of the joy that is in colour or in visible forms, not he that has failed of power or of honours or of kingdom has failed, but only he has failed of only This, for Whose winning he should renounce kingdoms and command over earth and ocean

and sky, if only, spurning the world of sense from beneath his feet, and straining to This, he may see."[9]

As regards the path of attaining this vision of the inaccessible Beauty, Plotinus advices the aspirant to withdraw into himself by turning his back on the material beauty which is only a copy, vestige or shadow of That heavenly Beauty. His counsel is that "Let us then flee to the beloved Fatherland" whence we have come, "and There is the Father". But our feet cannot undertake journey to Fatherland, nor can the coach or ship carry us there. Instead we have to sit in solitude, close our eyes and meditate for the arousal of the "the inner vision" which is the birthright of all, but which few turn to use. Our Soul must be trained for having this inner vision by engaging in noble pursuits, acquaintance with the works of beauty created by noble souls and searching those noble Souls. Souls that produced the works of beauty. But the only way in which the Souls of the creators of beauty can be searched and envisioned is to look into one's own Soul intently. One has to diligently remove all crookedness and ugliness, angularities and roughness associated with one's own Soul before one can become qualified to have a vision of the virtuous and noble Souls and thereby gather the requisite inner strength to attain the vision of the "First Beauty". Just as the artist assiduously goes on chiseling and polishing the statue till the unblemished beauty emerges before his trained eye, even so the aspirant has to remove every vice, impurity and weakness from his own Soul till it emerges "self-gathered in the purity of your being, nothing now remaining that can shatter that inner unity, nothing from without clinging to authentic man, when you find yourself wholly true to your essential nature, wholly that only veritable Light which is not measured by space...., when you perceive that you have grown to this, you are now become the very vision."

According to Plotinus only those who become godlike and beautiful can see God and Beauty. The eye which has become sun-like can alone see the Sun. Such a divine and beautiful Soul will mount to the Intellectual-Principle and survey all the beautiful Ideas which are Beauty incarnate. Beyond the Intellectual-

Principle the Soul will encounter the Good which is the *Fons et orige* and Principle of Beauty. "The Primal God and the Primal Good have one Dwelling-Place." [10]

In conclusion we may point out the exact parallelism which exists between the ethical teachings of Plotinus and *Bhagavadgītā*. The ideal of perfect life according to Plotinus lies in appropriating the Intellectual-Principle and leading the life of Reason and authentic Intellection. Similarly, the perfect man according to the *Bhagavadgītā*, cherishes the life of wisdom above all (*jñāna-vijñāna triptātmā*). Just as for Plotinus the Soul's true good and facility lies in devotion to the Intellectual-Principle, so also for the *Bhagavadgītā*, the acquisition of even a little of the religion of the Spirit frees man from the greatest of the terrors (*svalpam api asya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt*). According to both Plotinus and the *Bhagavadgītā*, the disengagement from the body and its pleasures and pains is recommended for the perfection in moral life. Again, Plotinus thinks it necessary for the Soul to ascend upwards for realizing the *Summum Bonum*. In like manner the *Bhagavadgītā* says that one who is endowed with the *sattva-guṇa*( the qualities of purity, knowledge and virtue) ascends upwards to meet the Divine which is the highest Good of human life (*ūrdhvam gacchanti sattvasthā*). Like the *Bhagavadgītā*, Plotinus is not satisfied with merely the cultivation of the Civic Virtues that enable man to lead a good social life. Both fix their gaze on the vision of the Life Divine (*Brāhmī-sthithi*). Nothing less than man's lodgment in God would satisfy Plotinus and the *Bhagavadgītā*. Thus, the perfection of moral life for both Plotinus and the *Gitā* consists in the realization of God.

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# *Ranade's Conception of the Bhagavadgītā*

Professor R.D. Ranade's monumental volume 'Bhagavadgītā as a Philosophy of God-realization', written by him a couple of years before his death in 1957 and published posthumously by the Nagpur University in 1959, together with his other scholarly works on the Upaniśads (A Constructive Survey of the Upaniśadic Philosophy) and the *Vedānta* (Vedānta as the Culmination of Indian Thought) constitutes a veritable modern '*Prasthāna Trayī*'.

Ranade may be classed with Jñāneśvara, the mystical exponent of the *Bhagavadgītā* with this important difference that being well-versed in Western Philosophic thought, Prof. Ranade brings to bear on the subject, contemporary concepts and mode of procedure. After dealing with the Vedantic interpreters like Śamkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva, the German interpreters like Garbe, Holtzmann and Otto, the Christian interpreters like Lorinzer, Farquhar and Weber, and the modern interpreters like Tilak, Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo, Prof. Ranade finds that in the labyrinth of interpretations "a definitely mystical interpretation of the *Bhagavadgītā* in terms of contemporary philosophy has been hitherto lacking."[1] This mystical interpretation can help us out of the labyrinth. According to this mystical interpretation, God-realisation constitutes the supreme teaching of the *Bhagavadgītā*. The Metaphysics, and Ethics of the *Bhagavadgitā* are a propaedeutic to the mystical theme of God-realisation. Prof. Ranade substantiates the Mystical interpretation by showing how the author of the *Bhagavadgītā*, in a manner strikingly similar to that of the great German philosopher Kant, discovers the antinomies embedded in metaphysical thought, propounds the Categorical Imperative of moral life, and reveals the nature of the Sublime, linking it ultimately to the vision of the Divine which constitutes "the be-all and the end-all of all existence."[2] Very peculiarly, the three great critiques of Kant also deal with the same important topics of the Antinomies, the Categorical Imperative and the Sublime. Thus, in the process of interpreting the

*Bhagavadgītā* in terms of Kantian concepts, Prof. Ranade simultaneously illuminates the abstruse philosophy of Kant and supplements it by a new Critique, namely, "the Critique of Intuition or Spiritual Experience." And last but not the least, he draws out a full-fledged Philosophy of God realisation, complete in all respects, from this greatest mystical-philosophical Poem, which will serve as a beacon-light to the seekers of the Divine.

## *The Antinomies in the Bhagavadgītā*

As in Kant, so also in the *Bhagavadgītā*, we find the antinomies concerning God, the World and Causality. These antinomies are necessarily embedded in metaphysical thought. Prof. Ranade deals with five antinomies in the *Bhagavadgītā* (i) the antinomy of the Personal and the Impersonal; (ii) the antinomy of the Actor and the Spectator; (iii) the antinomy of the Transcendent and the Immanent, about God; (iv) the antinomy of the Reality and the Unreality of the World; and (v) the antinomy of *Videha Mukti* and *Krama Mukti*. He further points out that the solution of these antinomies is also contained within the *Bhagavadgītā* itself.

### *(i) God, Personal or Impersonal ?*

Reconciled in *Super-Personalism*, the antinomy of the Personal and the Impersonal, the Saguna and the Nirguna is the familiar antinomy, which has divided interpreters like Śaṃkara, Ramānuja, Madhva, Vallabha and Nimbārka into different schools. In regard to the Impersonal characterization of Reality, we have the following passage in the 13th Chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā*:

***Jñeyam yattatpravaksyāmi yajjñatvamrtamaśnute,***
***Anādimatparam Brahma na sattannāsaducyate***

***Sarvatah pāṇipadām tatsarvato aksiśiromukham,***

***Sarvatah srutimalloke sarvamāṛrtya tiṣṭhati.***

Chapter XIII.12-13.

Here we have a totally impersonal characterisation of the Absolute. But in the 15th Chapter, the *Bhagavadgītā* puts forth the personalistic conception of God, which is pitted against the former part of the antinomy, namely, the impersonalistic conception. This antinomy is solved in the following passages of the 9th Chapter, wherein the Personal and the Impersonal characterizations are put forth simultaneously and God is called *Mātā* and *Pītā*, but also *prabhavah, pralayah, sthānam*:

***Pitāhamasya jagato mātā dhātā pitāmah,***
***Vedyam pavitramomkārah rksāma yājureva ca***

***Gatirbhartā prabhuh sākṣhi nivāsah śaraṇam suhṛta,***
***Prabhavah pralayah sthānamnidhānam bijamavyayam.***

Chapter IX. 17-18.

## (ii) Activity or Passivity?

***Reconciled in Emanationism:*** We find in the *Bhagavadgītā* antinomian description of Reality or God as being Actor or Spectator. On the one hand, the *Bhagavadgītā* regards *Prakṛti* or *Svabhāva* as fashioning the destiny of the Universe, and absolves God of all responsibility for action. God must, therefore, be regarded as a Spectator;

***Adhiṣthānam tathā Kartā karaṇam ca pṛthagavidham,***
***Vividhāśca pṛthakceṣta daivam cevātrapañcamam***

***Tatraivam sati kartāramātmanam kevalam tu yah,***
***Pasyatyakṛtabuddhitvānna sa pasyati durmatih.***

Chapter XVIII.14, 16.

On the other hand, in another famous passage, Action is attributed to God who whirls the world:

***Īśvarah sarvabhutānām hṛddese Arjunaa tiṣthati,***
***BhrāMāyānsarvabhūtāni yantrārudhāni māyayā***

Chapter XVIII.61.

The *Bhagavadgītā* reconciles these two doctrines of Actor and Spectator in the doctrine of Emanationism:

***Mayādhyakṣena prakrtih sūyate sacāracaram,***
***Hetunānena Kaunteya jagadviparivartate***

Chapter VI. 10.

The *Prakṛti* gives birth to all animate and inanimate existences, but it does so on account of the fact that God is its Supervisor, an *Adhyaksa*. Prof. Ranade remarks that, "it is on account of the combination of this passivity of *Prakṛti* and the activity of God that we can speak of Emanationism as a reconciliation of the conflicting ideas of activity and passivity".[3]

## (iii) Immanence or Transcendence :

Reconciled in *All-pervasiveness*: Propounding the doctrine of Transcendence of God, the *Bhagavadgītā* says that God illumines the world like the Sun, and like the Sun and the Sky, He remains uncontaminated:
***Yathā sarvagatam sauksmyādakaśam nopalipyate***
***Sarvatrāvastitho dehe tathātmā nopalipyate.***

***Yathā prākāśayatyekah kṛtsnam lokamimam Ravih,***
***Ksetram kṣetri tatha krsnam prakasayati Bhārata***

Chapter XIII. 32,33

But many other passages illustrate the Immance of God:

***Mattah parataram nānyatkiñcidasti Dhanañjaya,***
***Mayi sarvamidam protam sūtre manigana iva.***

Chapter VII. 7.

All existences in the world are pearls or jewels woven on Me who is their thread. The *Bhagavadgītā* offers a reconciliation of Immanence and Transcendence in what Prof. Ranade calls the doctrine of Transcendo-Immanence:

***Viṣṭabhyahamidam krtsnamekānśena sthito jagat.***

Chapter X. 42.

Again, according to the doctrine of Incarnation, "God stands outside the world but descends inside as an *Avatāra*. From a transcendent Being, He becomes immanent in the world".[4]

## (iv) The World Real or Unreal?

Reconciled in *Ephemeralism* : In a celebrated passage the *Bhagavadgītā* asserts the reality of the world:

***Bhūmirāpo analo vāyuh kham mano buddhireva ca***
***Ahamkāram itiyam me bhinnā prakrtirastadhā.***

Chapter VII. 4.

This passage speaks of the reality of *Parā* and *Aparā Prakrti* in unmistakable terms. As opposed to this realistic doctrine, the *Bhagavadgītā* puts forth the doctrine of the unreality of the world in terms of *Māyā* or the conception of "*Aśvatṭha*". In one passage it is said that Māyā, being a tool in the hands of God, is destroyed by Him:

***Daivīhyesā gunamayī mam māyā duratyayā***
***Mameva ye prapadyante māyametām taranti te.***

Chapter VII. 14.

Again, in the conception of "*Aśvattha*" mentioned in the 15th Chapter, the *Bhagavadgītā* sums up the ultimate type of unreality. As Prof. Ranade points out, etymologically "*Asvattha*" means, "that which will not last even till tomorrow"( *na svo api tisthati tyasvatthah*).[5] Now the reconciliation of the reality and the unreality of the world are achieved through the doctrine of *vyakta-madhya* or Ephemeralism:

***Avyaktādīni bhūtani vyaktamadhyāni Bhārata***
***Avyaktanidhanānyeva tatra kā paridevanā.***

Chapter II. 28.

Prof. Ranade explains: "Things come into existence and depart in a short while... They are only "*vyakta-madhya*". Behind them there is an Infinity, before them also there is an Infinity." [6]

**(v) Videha-Mukti or Krama Mukti?**

Reconciled in *Jivanmukti* : In the passage,
***Anekajanmasamsiddhastato yāti parām gatim.***

Chapter VI. 45.

The *Bhagavadgītā* talks of *Krama-Mukti* or "procrastinated liberation' through a successive series of lives. On the other hand, *Videha Mukti* or *Ante Mukti* is described in the passages:

***Antakāle ca mameva smaran muktva kalevaram***

Chapter VIII. 5

***Yah prayāti tyajandeham sa yāti paramām gatim.***

Chapter VIII. 13.

To remember God at the time of death will enable a man to pass

into God at once. A reconciliation of the two doctrines has been achieved by the *Bhagavadgītā* in the concept of *brāhmīstithi* or life in God or *Brahman*, which is equivalent to *Jivanmukti* or Liberation during life through God-vision. To quote Prof. Ranade, "We have not to leave the world. We are full of joy when we are in contemplation and realisation of God. That state of beatification is itself liberation."[7]

After discussing the antinomies, Prof. Ranade sums up the whole metaphysical doctrine of the *Bhagavadgītā* in his own exquisitely suggestive style by saying that for the *Bhagavadgītā,* Reality is mystical in nature in the sense that firstly, God is the greatest miracle; secondly, there are absolute limitations of human knowledge in respect of God; and finally, it is "God alone who is able to know His ultimate nature." (Chapter X. 15*)*. Thus, according to the *Bhagavadgītā*, Divine Self-Consciousness alone constitutes the ultimate Reality, the foundation and peak of all thought and existence. Prof. Ranade here suggestively reminds us of the Aristotalian God who is Thought of thought or the Eternal Self-spectator

## Activism and the Categorical Imperative

Dealing with the ethical doctrines of the *Bhagavadgītā*, Prof. Ranade points out that as regards the conception of the Categorical imperative, there is a wonderful resemblance between Kant and the *Bhagavadgītā*. What is to be noted is that he goes beyond the sheer surface resemblance between the two, which has frequently impressed many a scholar and derives the general formulation as well as the three specifications of the Categorical Imperative from the *Bhagavadgītā*, in a remarkably Kantian spirit. The general formulation occurs in the following utterances

***Kāryamityeva yatkarma niyatam kriyate Arjunaa***

Chapter XVIII. 9.

***Karmanyevādhikaraste mā phalesu kadācana***

Chapter II.47.

"You ought to do a thing because it is your duty to do." This is the general formulation of the Categorical Imperative in the *Bhagavadgitā*. Then there are three specifications of it. Firstly, duty is to be performed leaving away all attachment and desire for the fruit (*sangām tyaktvā phalāni ca* Chapter XVIII.6). Secondly, duty is to be performed skilfully (*yogah karmasu kausalam* Chapter II.50) and in a spirit of equanimity (*siddhyasiddhyoh samo bhūtva samatvam yoga ucyate* Chapter II.48). Thirdly, actions done in a spirit of *Yajña* or sacrifice free one from their contamination, because being dedicated to God they are deposited in the safe custody with Him:

***Yatkarosi yadaśnāsi yajjuhosi dadāsi yat,***
***Yattapasyasi Kaunteya tatkurusvamadarpanam***

Chapter IX. 27.

This specification corresponds to the Kingdom of Ends in Kant. The ethical antinomy between Karma and *Jñâna* is also solved in the above concept of *Yajña* or sacrifice.

Prof. Ranade says that in addition to Activism which is the most prominent theory of the Ethical Ideal in the *Bhagavadgītā*, there are other three theories also, namely, Moralism, Supermoralism and Beatificism. As regards Moralism, the *Bhagavadgītā* presents an analytical study of various virtues in the twelfth, thirteenth, sixteenth and eighteenth chapters. Prof. Ranade selects three representative virtues each, from the four different groups of virtues in the above chapters, and comprises them under one single central virtue of God-devotion in an Augustinian manner. Thus, the virtues of Compassion (*Karunā*), Equanimity (*Samatā*), Purity (*Śaucha*), Harmlessness (*Ahimsā*), Self-control (*ātmavinigraha*), Non-attachment (*anāsakti*), Fearlessness (*abhaya*), Sacrifice (*yajña*), Peace (*Śānti*), Valour (*tejas*), Lordliness (*Īśvarabhāva*), and Service (*paricaryā*), are linked together by the central thread of God-devotion in the sense that they are all expressions of the

latter. Compassion is an expression of praying for mercy from God. Equanimity is both a condition and a result of God-devotion. Purity is an effect of God-devotion. Harmlessness arises from the consideration of equality of all beings before God by the devotee. Control of our senses is a pre-requisite of one-pointed devotion to God. Attachment to God involves non-attachment to all other objects whatsoever. Fearlessness follows on the heels of God-realisation by the devotee. Complete sacrifice of all objects to God is implied in God-realisation. Highest peace follows the enjoyment of divine bliss. Valour or courage is a *sine qua non* of a God-devotee. Lordliness characterises a realised saint in the sense that "he stands alone to himself in his solitary greatness" with power to do good, whenever and wherever he likes. Service to humanity by creating conditions for the realisation of God in and for others constitutes the supreme value of a saint.

After elucidating this analytic and synthetic view of moral life according to the *Bhagavadgītā*, Prof. Ranade passes on to the Supermoralism propounded in it. This Supermoralism is signified by the terms '*naiskarmyasiddhi*' and '*nistraigunya*', the former meaning rising superior to all Karma and Dharma, and the latter, rising beyond the triplet of Gunas. The truest morality would lie in going beyond all Dharma and *Karmas*:

***Sarva dharmām parityajya māmekam śaranam vraja.***

Chapter XVIII. 66.

And rising above even the Vedas to the *Ātman* because they are permeated by the three Gunas:

***Traigunya visayā vedā nistraigunyo bhāvArjunaah***
***Nirdvandvo nityasatvastho niryogaksema atmavāna.***

Chapter II. 45.

Thus, the *Bhagavadgītā* exalts mystical experience above the knowledge of the Vedas.

Finally, the doctrine of Beatificism implied in the conception of

the '*Sthitaprajña*' is said to rank higher than Moralism and Supremoralism. Beatificism identifies happiness with Reality, i. e.; the axiological conception of Bliss and the metaphysical conception of the *Brahman* are the same. Prof. Ranade asks us to note three points in the analysis of Beatificism. Firstly, a saint touches God, comes into direct contact and communion with Him:

***Yuñjanneva sadātmānam yogī vigata kalmasah,***
***Sukhena Brahmasamparsamatyantam sukhamasnute***

Chapter VI. 24.

Secondly, there is the identification of the saint and *Brahman*:

***Yo antah sukho antarārāmastathantarjyotireva yah***
***Sa yogī Brahmanirvānam Brahmabhutodigacchati***

Chapter V.24.

Thirdly, there is the identification of the blissful state itself with *Brahman*

***Praśāntamanasam hyenam yoginam sukhamuttamam,***
***Upaiti śantarajasam Brahmabhutamakalmasam***

Chapter VI. 27.

## *The Nature of God, Criteria of God-realisation and the Sublime vision of God*

The discussion of the problem of the nature of God in the *Bhagavadgītā* is a comparatively small one. The only place where it is somewhat philosophically treated is the twelfth chapter where a distinction is drawn between *Saguna Upāsanā* and *Avyakta Upāsanā*, the former being regarded as even higher than the latter:

***Te prāpnuvanti māmeva sarvabhuta hite ratāh***

Chapter XII. 4.

However, as Prof. Ranade says, 'the chief object of the *Bhagavadgītā* is a practical one and instead of spending much labour upon a theoretical discussion of the nature of God, it suggests us certain methods by means of which God could be practically attained.'[8]

Before coming to these methods, we may point out briefly three criteria of mystical experience suggested by the *Bhagavadgītā* in one famous line of the ninth chapter:

***Pratyāksavagamam dharmyam susukham kartumavyayam.***

Chapter IX. 2.

Prof. Ranade here points out that these are pregnant words '*pratyaksãvagamam*', '*susukham*', '*avyayam*'. They contain in themselves all the criteria of mystical experience that could be imagined."[9]. '*Pratyakşa*' is super-sensuousness; '*Susukham*' is beatification or bliss; and '*avyaya*' is permanence or continuity. Firstly, mystical experience would be real only if it becomes an object of pratyaksa or supersensuous knowledge or intuition. Secondly, genuine mystical experience is *Susukham* or is accompanied by beatification or bliss. Prof. Ranade says. "This bliss is as much above what we call happiness as happiness is above pleasure. The bliss of a saint is much above the happiness of Socrates as the happiness of Socrates is above the pleasure of a pig."[10] Thirdly, true mystical experience must be '*avyaya*', continuous, growing and permanent, and pervade all our states of consciousness namely, *jāgrati*, *svapna*, *susupti* and *turyā*. An experience that occurs today and is lost tomorrow is no real experience at all. The mystical form we see, the *anāhata sabda* we hear must not desert us.

As regards the practical aspect of God-realisation, Prof. Ranade draws out three different methods of meditation namely, ideological, the moral and the mystical which are suited respectively to the intellectually inclined philosopher, the ethically oriented moralist and any human being in general. In the

ideological method, a philosopher may meditate on the conception of God as *Purusottamam* or all-pervading *Paramātman* who rules over all material and spiritual existence alike, the conception of God as sutra that is immanent in all existences (*mayi sarvamidam protam sutre manigana iva.* Chapt VII.7.) of the world, the conception of God as *Vaiśvānara* or the Herecleitean celestial Fire that inhibits and enlivens all animate and inanimate existences (*aham Vaiśvānaro bhutva prāninām dehamasritah* Chapter XV.14.), the conception of God as the great transcendent Being or the *Ātman* responsible for generation and growth of all objects in the world (*yathā prakāśa yatyekah krtsnam lokamimam ravih.* Chapter XIII. 33.), the conception of God as Māyī or the Being living in a camouflage which has to be penetrated, the conception of God as the mellifluous supreme spiritual nectar (*amrta*), the conception of God as *tajjalān*, or the source of all things, the annihilation of all things, and the life of all things, the conception of God as *atisthāna* or immanent-transcendent Being (*vistabhyāhamidam krtsnamekansena stitho jagat.* Chapter X: 42), the conception of God as supreme Jneya transcending all dualities, qualities etc.

*Sat* and *asat* (XIII. 12), and the conception of God as *Āścarya* or supreme object of wonder (II.29), Prof. Ranade comments that such an ideological meditation may not put us in possession of God, but it will take us a few steps ahead in our spiritual pursuits. Then there is the Moral Method of contemplating on the virtues of *abhayam, śaucam, ātmavinigraha, samatvam, ahimsā, kśamā* etc., so as to fix them firmly in our mind, the method followed by the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society. Such contemplation may not take us to God, but as Prof. Ranade says, "it will give you the gun powder; only a spark might be required and then there might be an explosion."[11]

Lastly, there is the Mystical Method of meditation comprising the physiological element, the psycho-ethical element, and the devotional element and the element of grace. Under the physiological head, the *Bhagavadgītā* mentions the *āsana* or posture for meditation, breath-control or equalisation of *prāna* and

*apāna* and *nāsikagradrsti* or fixation of sight on the tip of the nose. According to Prof. Ranade these physiological aids are helpful but not absolutely necessary. Psycho-ethically one can reach a powerful stage in mystical life first, by sacrificing the objects of our senses in the senses, the senses in the breath, breath in the mind and mind in the *Ātman*. And secondly, by controlling *Kāma*, the chiefest enemy of man, intense concentration and composition of mind, and destroying even the subconscious flavour or rasa for sensual enjoyment. Thirdly, *bhāva* or *bhakti*, an unexplained and inexplicable love of God, one-pointed (*ananyacetastvam*), continuous (*nityayuktvam*) and all-absorbing devotion (*Tameva śaranam gaccha sarva bhāvena Bhārata* XVIII. 62) is the most important element of mystical meditation. It will enable us to know God, see Him and enter into Him: *jñatum drstum ca tattvena pravestum ca Parantapa* (XI. 54).

The last element necessary for the success of our spiritual meditation is the Grace of God, which descends on the aspirant in three stages. Firstly, God gives a bent to the mind of the devotee, a stimulus and a direction in which he might work (*dadāmi buddhiyogam tam* X.10). Secondly, after he has worked unceasingly in this direction for a long time, he becomes recipient of God's *anukampā* or compassion (*tesamevanukampārtham* X.11). Finally, God crowns his efforts with the gift of His blessing:

***Tatprasādatparām śānti sthānam prāpsyasi śāśvatam.***

(Chapter XVIII. 62)

It is by this Mystical Method that the sublime Vision of God, which is the supreme goal according to the *Bhagavadgītā*, is attained. Prof. Ranade points out that we find in the description of *Viswarūpadarśana*, experiences such as those of splendour, wonder, terror and joy, which link it up with a universal Philosophy of the Sublime. Recalling Kant's metaphysical analysis of the concept of Sublime in the Critique of Judgment, he says that the distinction between the beautiful and the sublime is the

distinction between assimilation and conquest. While in the experience of the beautiful, the mind of man becomes assimilated to the object perceived, in case of the sublime it is conquered by outside experience. But he advances further than Kant and insists that the nature of the Infinitude is portrayed in the manifestation of the Sublime. The experience of the Sublime seems to be almost transcendent and baffling, even for the imagination to reach. Infinitude is inevitably linked up with Divinity, as is the case with the *Apeiron* of Anaximander and '*béhada*' of Kabir. When we remember the great statement made by Kant that there is nothing more sublime in the world than the Moral, we see how the ideas of the Sublime, the Moral and the Divine are connected together in the great system of Philosophy of Spirit like that of the *Bhagavadgītā* according to Prof. Ranade.

## References

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2.Ibid. p.191
3.Ibid. p.184
4.Ibid. p.186
5.Ibid. p.188
6.Ibid. p.188
7.Ibid. p.190
8.Ibid. p.225
9.Ibid. p.232
10. Ibid. p.223
11. Ibid. p.248

# *Vedānta - True and False*

It is a well-known fact that the philosophy of Vedānta as propounded by the Upaniśadic seers, and brought to perfection by Śrī Śaṃkarācārya was not simply a product of intellectual speculation but ***grew*** out of their direct and first-hand experience of the reality designated as the *Ātman* or *Brahman*. *Brahmānubhava* or mystical experience of the Reality was transcribed in the philosophy of *Vedānta*. As such, philosophy is to be understood as nothing but an intellectual construction that serves as a rational justification of one's own experiences. Philosophical concepts and doctrines derive their *raison d'être* and meaning from the immediate experiences they seek to explain and justify. The moment they are torn apart from their experiential foundations and treated in isolation, their meaning becomes distorted. Distortion of meaning leads inevitably though insensibly to muddled thinking that casts its dark shadow on practical life. Thus, philosophical doctrines and concepts are liable to be misused at the hands of intelligent charlatans and learned hypocrites who befool the elite and the masses alike for their own self-aggrandizement. The sublime philosophy of *Vedānta* and its doctrines have accordingly been so much distorted by the so-called Gurus that it would be desirable to place some of the fundamental Vedāntic doctrines in their right perspective. This would help us discriminate the genuine *Vedānta* from the pseudo-*Vedānta*.

The chief among the doctrines of Vedānta is that "All this is verily the *Brahman*" (*Sarvarm˙ Khalvidam˙ Brahman*), and so nothing is real apart from the *Brahman* (*Brahma Satyam˙ Jaganmithya*). Now this doctrine is rooted in the unitive experience of Śri Śaṃkarācārya wherein the Acārya lost his personal identity in the *Brahmanic* consciousness and bliss. He has emphasized this fact when he says that before one can realize the supreme truth that "All this is verily the *Brahman*", one has actually to experience through life-long intense sādhanā or spiritual practice one's own identity with the *Brahman*. It is only

in the moments of the realization of *Brahman* on the part of an aspirant that "All" becomes verily the *Brahman*, so that the so-called "All" has no real existence whatsoever for him. The doctrine, therefore, emphasizes that an aspirant has first to approach a powerful and realized *Brahma-jñāni* for getting instruction in the lore of *Vedānta*; secondly, eschewing immorality he has to practice devotional meditation on that secret instruction for days, months and years throughout his life; and thirdly, even after he has experienced his identity with the *Brahman*, he has to continue to meditate on him in the spirit of a true and humble devotee. After reaching the highest unitive experience, Śri Śankarācārya prays to the highest *Brahman*, "Notwithstanding the fact that there is no difference between you and me, O Lord, I belong to you but you do not belong to me, just as a wave belongs to the ocean, but the ocean does not belong to the wave".

This very true doctrine of *Vedānta* can turn into a false and vicious doctrine in the hands of a learned hypocrite. He learns the *Vedānta* from the textbooks, and after acquiring mere verbal knowledge of its doctrines considers himself a *Brahma-jñāni*. But, devoid as he is of any experience of *Brahman*, he simply repeats parrot-like the statement that "All this is verily the *Brahman*". "All" or the objects of sense being real for him, he indulges freely in sensuous enjoyment, all the while supposing that the Brahman in him is sporting with the *Brahman* in the objects. For him everything is a sport or vilās of *Brahman*. Like *Brahman* he himself has gone beyond good and evil. Moral injunctions and prohibitions lose all significance for him. Assuming the role of a *Guru*, he, both by precept and example, beguiles his followers into believing that they can become *Brahma- jñānis* without passing through the discipline of devotional contemplation and meditation, supported by the virtues *of* dispassion, control of senses, humility and service to a realized Master. One could easily trace the origin of the current pseudo-Vedāntic spiritualistic cults and miracle-mongering to such false Gurus.

According to Śri Śankarācārya's doctrine of *Māyā*, the world of multiplicity, being a super-imposition on the Brahman, is unreal

apart from the reality of *Brahman*, just as the gold ornaments as modifications of gold are non-existent apart from gold, or the snake as an appearance of the rope is illusory apart from the rope. As Prof. V.H. Date has conclusively established that the whole purport and value of the *Māyā* doctrine lies in making us realize the sole reality of *Brahman*.[1] Just as the various forms of ornaments imposed upon the lump of gold have no reality and value for the goldsmith whose eye is fixed on the lump of gold, even so the manifold world of sense superimposed on the *Brahman* has no reality and value for the *Brahma-jñāni* who has realized the *Brahman*. Thus, a *Brahma-jñāni* alone has a right to call the world of multiplicity as an illusory and unsubstantial passing-show apart from its substratum, the *Brahman*. But the pseudo-Vedāntin merely pretends that the world is illusory or the product of *Māyā*, because he does not possess even an iota of *Brahmānubhava* which may help him realize the unreality of the world. Consequently, he deceives himself and his followers when he calls the world as nothing but *Māyā* and yet nourishes a craving for its objects. Instead of cultivating an attitude of renunciation and non-attachment to the short-lived objects of this world, he hankers after them and justifies his indulgence in them on the pretext that they are an expression of the *Vilāsa* of *Brahman*.

It is again this lack of the realization of the *Brahman* that is at the root of the pseudo-Vedāntic doctrine that devotion (*Bhakti*) can have no place in the *Advaita Vedānta*. Advaitism is supposed to be wedded to the doctrine of the sole and the only reality of non-dual *Brahman*, while *Bhakti* is thought to be possible only if there exists a duality between God and His devotee. Thus, *Advaitism* and *Bhakti* appear to be mutually incompatible. In fact, this very statement of the mutual incompatibility of the Advaita *Vedānta* and *Bhakti* has generated the time-honoured hostility of the *Vaiṣṇava* Acāryas towards the *Vedānta* of Śri Śaṃkaracarya. In this context, it would be fruitful to recall the rebuke administered by Śri Śaṃkarācārya to the aging scholar who was absorbed in the pursuit of grammar to desist from wasting his precious life in that fruitless exercise and instead achieve the highest goal of God-realization by singing the glory of *Govinda*. The devotional hymns composed by Śri Śaṃkarācārya constitute

a solid testimony to the indispensability of *Bhakti* as the means as well as the support of the mystical realization of the *Advaita* of *Brahman*. As Prof. Date has said, "theism and mysticism are allies of each other."[1] Thus, they are not only mutually compatible but are like two sides of the same coin of concrete spiritual life of the participation in the nature of God. St. Rāma Dāsa also defines a devotee (*Bhakta*) as one who is not separate from God (*Vibhakta*). One who participates in the nature of God is the only real devotee. The real *Bhakti* is that which culminates in the non-difference between the devotee and God in non-dual experience. It is thus understandable that very great *Advaita* Vedāntins like Śri Śankarācārya and Rānāde were also great and ardent devotees.

Apart from the pseudo-Vedāntic doctrines concerning *Brahman* and *Māyā*, there are not a few of such doctrines about the Self. It is said that *Avidyā* or ignorance about its pure, original nature as *Brahman is* the root cause of the bondage of the Self. *Avidyā* is compared to darkness while *Vidyā* is likened to light. As such, the seeker of God is advised to make the temple of his mind pure so that it becomes fit to receive God. Unless his mind is rid of its lust, anger, arrogance, greed, infatuation and egotism, the seeker cannot hope to know God. Then he has to cultivate moral virtues like non-violence, truth, non-anger, tranquillity etc. so that the knowledge and light of God might enter his mind. But, sadly enough, no one can conquer his passions and cultivate even a single moral virtue to perfection within the small span of his life. Even a great seeker like Arjuna felt that the ever-fickle mind is as difficult to control as the wind that knows no bounds. If God can be realised only after attaining moral perfection, then no one can ever hope to meet God. Moreover, if freedom from passions and moral perfection could be achieved without the aid of God, then why should one care for the realization of God. St. Raidāsa points out that God has no function in the case of a man who is sinless. "What sins can you save me from O God, if I have no sins to my credit? How can water wash off mud from a man's feet, if they have never been immersed in mud at all? ... How can you release a man who is already free."[2] So if we are already sinless and free from the bondage of passions, what have we to do with God? Thus, it is false *Vedānta* to insist that a seeker should free his mind

from impurities of passions and gain moral perfection before he could realise God. As a matter of fact, this amounts to putting the cart before the horse. If light is brought in, darkness would automatically cease; with the realization of God, the perfection in moral life would necessarily be attained. As Prof. Rānāde has pointed out, all moral virtues flow from the central virtue of God-devotion, because God is the source of all auspicious qualities.[3]

This brings us to another pseudo-Vedāntic doctrine that the highest *Brahman* is *nirguna* or devoid of all attributes whatsoever. *Brahman* is thus conceived to be blankness par excellence. But *Brahman* is said to be without any attributes in the sense that being infinite, He cannot be characterized by any limited number of attributes, because such a determination would amount to a negation of His infinity. Hence St. Rāmadāsa interpreted the term '*nirguna*' in the sense of '*bahuguna*' and asserted that far from being the supreme blankness, *Brahman* is the reservoir of an infinite number of qualities. As Mosley puts it, "Truth, Beauty and Goodness form a triple band round the girdle of God."[4] It is only from the God of infinite qualities that a seeker can expect to receive divine grace, which is the quality of all qualities. As Date says, it is divine grace alone, which supports the aspirant in the beginning, the middle and the end of spiritual life.[5]

The pseudo-Vedāntins advise the seeker of *Brahman* to rise above the three states of waking (*jāgriti*), dreaming (*svapna*) and deep sleep (*suśupti*) and attain the fourth state or the *turiya-vastha*, wherein pure, non-dual Brahmanic state is realized. However, it is a misnomer to call the Brahmanic state as the fourth state. When one experiences *Brahman*, one transcends all states. This condition of transcendence cannot be called the fourth state; because fourth state has meaning only in relation to the other three states viz., *jāgriti, svapna* and *susupti*. With the rise of *Brahmānubhava*, the so-called states lose all relevance. If at all we need to characterize the condition of *Brahmānubhava*, it can be called as the condition of supra-consciousness or supreme wakefulness, which is unbroken and homogenous (*akhanda* and *ekarasa*).

Thus, the *Advaita Vedānta* which constitutes the finest legacy of our philosophical and spiritual heritage should again be linked closely with the direct, first-hand and immediate experience of Reality, so that discerning seekers in India and abroad do not *fall* a prey to learned hypocrites who have distorted the sublime teachings of our national philosophy for their narrow selfish ends. It is this re-linking of *Brahmānubhava* with the *Vedānta* that would help us to distinguish truth from falsehood.

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5. *Ranade Memorial Lectures,* University of Poona, Pune, India, 1986

# *Theism of Rāmānuja and Nimbārka*

Indian theism that is found in a developed form already in the *Gitā*, the *Mahābhārata*, and then finds its culmination in the philosophies of Rāmānuja and Nimbārka. The characteristic *marks of* this Theism are a belief in the supreme reality of a personal God endowed with all conceivable auspicious attributes, a conviction that God is not only immanent in the individual souls and the material world but also transcends them, and a faith that *Bhakti* or devotion to God is the ultimate means of salvation. Rāmanuja who studied *Vedānta* under Yādava Prakāsha was also deeply influenced by the devotional hymns of Alvārs, the poet saints of South India mainly through his contacts with Yamunacārya, the grandson of Nāthamuni. His chief aim was to work out the philosophical foundations of the intensely devotional religion popular among the Alvārs. In other words, his philosophy in all its ramifications is nothing but the attempt to boost up the religious doctrine of Personal God conceived as supreme perfection, and characterised by love. Rāmānuja, being the standard-bearer of *Vaiṣṇava* Religion, engaged himself in a sustained polemic against the impersonal Absolutism of Śaṃkara, and developed his peculiar philosophic position of Vishistadvaita by way of criticism of the Advaitic view -point.

## *Viśistādvaita* and *Dvaitādvaita*

Nimbārka who flourished after Rāmānuja propounded the *Dvaitādvaita* philosophy as distinguished from the Viśistādvaita philosophy of the latter. He was deeply influenced by Rāmānuja. Rāmānuja and Nimbārka are the illustrious founders of two distinct schools of *Śrisampradāya* and the *Śanakasamprādya*. These *Vaishnava* philosophers besides leaning heavily on the *Pancarātra Samhitā* also claim the support of the *Upanishads*, and regard their respective systems to be the most representative embodiment of the real purpose of the Upanishadic teaching.

They agree in holding that though the ultimate reality as described in the Upanishads is a single unity, yet the aspect of multiplicity has not been ignored therein. The multiplicity or difference, therefore, has to be somehow accommodated as a reality in the ultimate scheme of things. But these Acāryas differ among themselves in the manner in which they reconcile unity and multiplicity. While Rāmānuja's Viśistādvaitic System subordinates, multiplicity to unity, Nimbārka's *Dvaitādvaitvāda* considers multiplicity to be at par with unity. In other words, while Rāmānuja believes in identity-in-and-through-difference or identity qualified by differences, Nimbārka believes in identity-and-difference.

Both Rāmānuja and Nimbārka admit three realities—God, Soul and Matter, the last two being dependent on God. However, this dependence is conceived differently by the two Acāryas. According to Rāmānuja, matter and souls are the attributes of God, and so they are absolutely dependent on Him and are inseparable from Him. According to Nimbārka, matter and souls being the parts or energies of God are dependent on Him. Thus, for both the Acāryas there is an identity (*Abheda*) between God on the one hand and matter and souls on the other. But Rāmānuja subordinates matter and souls to the supreme God by making them His attributes and thus propounds the doctrine of identity-in-and-through-difference or identity qualified by difference (*Viśistādvaita*). Nimbārka, on the' other hand, regards identity (*Abheda*) and difference (*Bheda*) as separately and equally real, and propounds the doctrine of identity-and-difference (*Bhedābheda*), inasmuch as souls-and matter having no independent existence (*Svatantrasattā-bhāvah*) are identical (*Abheda*) with God, and yet being dependent (*partantrasātta-bhāva*) and limited are also different (*bheda*) from God who is independent and unlimited.

# GOD OR BRAHMAN

## Rāmānuja's Epistemological Path

Rāmānuja establishes the ultimate reality of qualified (*savisesha*) Brahman by way of epistemology. Criticising the Advaitic concept of pure consciousness devoid of difference, he says that the theory of a non-differentiated unitary substance found a basis neither in the immediate act of consciousness nor in perception and inference. The experienced real is always a content characterised by the differences, for what is experienced is a substance – attribute, and never a bare substance devoid of attributes. The absolutely unqualified (*nirviseśa*) reality cannot be directly experienced, for there can be no experience without the assumption of some qualified character, 'since an experience, being my own unique experience, is necessarily qualified.' Experience is qualified in nature even during sleep or swoon. Even the scriptures testify that Brahman is real, pure consciousness and infinite (*satyam jñānam anantarm Brahma*) which, are nothing but its characters. Moreover, scriptures being a collection of words arranged in order and relation, and each word therein being a whole comprising a stern and a suffix cannot but signify a reality having characters. Perception also cannot reveal any entity, which is characterless. It requires no proof that all determinate perception (*Savikalpa Pratyaksha*) manifests an entity with its characters. As regards indeterminate perception (*nirvikalpa pratyaksa*), it also manifests sonic character inasmuch as its indeterminateness consists only in the exclusion of some particular character and not in the negation of all characters. All experiences are expressed in a proposition- "This is so"—and thus involve the manifestation of some characters. The basis of inference being perception, all inference must necessarily reveal a thing with certain characteristics. Thus, Rāmānuja establishes that no source of knowledge can reveal to us any entity devoid of characters. As he puts it, "Consciousness is either proved or not. If it is proved, it follows that it possesses attributes; if it is not, it is something absolutely nugatory, like a Skyflower and similar purely imaginary things.[1]

## Brahman as Savisesha

Rāmānuja arrives at the conclusion that *Brahman* can be conceived only as a unity qualified by differences. Moreover, it is not after the pattern of pure consciousness that we must conceive it, but alter the manner of a self, combining within himself, an infinite number of attributes including consciousness. Brahman is personal in character, for it is a self or knower possessing consciousness as one of its essential attributes. There being no sufficient evidence for the ultimacy of a saguna or personal Brahman in the Upanisads, Rāmānuja falls back on Paurānic literature in general and *Visnu Purāna* in particular to gain support for his doctrine that Brahman is the highest Person characterised by the most blessed and auspicious attributes. Accordingly, *Brahman* is described in his commentary to the *Bhagvadgītā* as "the Lord of *Sri*, whose essential nature consists in being the sole reservoir of all illustrious attributes, the antithesis of all evil, such attributes as knowledge and bliss, who is the great ocean of the legions of the boundless, exalted and countless glorious qualities, behoving His nature, such as omniscience, strength, sovereignty, constancy, power and lustre, whose Divine form is a mine of effulgence, beauty, comeliness, youth and other perfections of the Person."[2]

Rāmānuja explains away those Upanishadic passages, which refer to *Brahman* as being Nirguna or attributeless by remarking that such passages mean to exclude only the evil attributes from the nature of *Brahman*. The *Brahman* is described as the soul-body complex in which soul is of the nature of *saccidānanda*, while body is constituted by matter and individual souls (*acit* and *cit*). *Brahman* is, doubtless, unity par excellence but that unity is *Saguṇa*, *gunaviśista*, *cidācidviśista*, hence *Viśistādvaita* is seen to be the only intelligible metaphysical doctrine. *Brahmādvaita* really connotes one *Brahman* having souls and matter for its body, so that the reality of the animate and inanimate world is logically compatible with the reality of *Advaita*. Though the individual selves and the objects in nature are independent entities existentially and are externally related, yet, as they have their meaning in the *Brahman* as the all-self, they are related to it

internally as its modes or prakāras. It is in this connection that Rāmānuja formulates his important concept of *aprthaksiddhi* or the relation of internal inseparability between *Brahman*, *ćit* and *aćit*. Though matter and soul are substances in themselves, yet in relation to God, they become His attributes. They are the body of God who is their soul. They are controlled and supported by God who is their immanent inner controller (*antaryāmi*). Though immanent in the whole world, God yet transcends it in His essence. Just as in the case of an ordinary individual, only the body changes while the soul remains changeless, similarity it is only the matter and souls as the body and form that change, while God as their inner soul remains unchanged. Hence God in His transcendence remains unaffected by the change amid limitation of matter as well as the miseries and the imperfections of the souls. Like Aristotle's God, He is the unmoved mover of the world process.

## Brahman as Cause

According to Rāmānuja, *Brahman* or God is both the material and efficient cause of the world and is the all-controller, the ground of all, and the all-sustainer as well as all-destroyer. It has got a subtle condition and a gross condition. In its subtle condition, it contains the matter and souls in their imperceptible form as its body and is called the *Kārana-Brahma*, while in its gross condition it manifests itself in the form of this 'world consisting of matter and souls and is called the *Kārya-Brahma.*' The creation and destruction of the world, are nothing but the cyclic passage of the *Brahman* from its subtle condition to the gross condition and back again. The transformation of *Brahman* from its causal condition to the effect condition is understood to be real and not illusory, which means that *parināmavāda* as against *Vivartavāda* is ontologically the correct theory of causation in the opinion of Rāmānuja. As he has already made clear, this transformation of the *Kārana-Brahma* into *Kārya-Brahma*, does not imply that the essentially eternal nature of Brahman is disturbed by change, but it only means that the matter and the souls which make up merely the body-aspect of Brahman undergo change. Creation and absorption affect the world but the essential nature of Brahman

remains unmodified. Therefore, the world is, on the one hand, different from Brahman in so far as it is subject to constant change and manifold imperfections, even while the Brahman remains undisturbed in its perfection. On the other hand, the world is not different from Brahman in the sense that the latter holds the world-within itself as its own dependent mode or attribute. It is maintained Spinoza—like that the Brahman is one substance, self-dependent and supreme (*prakāri*) while all else is but its mode (*prakāra*). The latter are the controlled (*niyamya*), the supported (*dhārya*), the parts (*amśa*) and the means (*śesha*), while the former is their controller (*niyantā*), support (*adhāra*) the whole (amśi), and 'the end (*śesha*).[3] Following *Pancarātra*, *Rāmānuja* regards God as the perfect Personality having a Divine body (*aprākrtādehavisista*). He is called *Nārāyana* or *Vāsudeva*, while his consort is called *Laxmi* with whom he dwells in *Vaikuntha*, an abode, made of pure *sattva* or *Nityavibhuti*. He has qualities like knowledge, bliss, power, mercy etc., which are unique, eternal and infinite. He is the creator, preserver and destroyer of this universe, and reveals himself in four-fold forms of *Vāsudeva*, *Sankarshana*, *Pradyumna* and *Aniruddha*.

## Brahman as Unity and Difference

Nimbārka also admits three realities viz, God, souls and matter, but regards last two as dependent on God. God is the highest *Brahman* having all good qualities. He has transformed himself into the world of matter-and souls without losing himself in them, just as prāna manifests itself into different sense functions independent of it. It is the peculiarity of God's nature that he is at once one with and different from the world of souls and matter. So Nimbarka's doctrine is known as *Svabhāvika bhedābhedavāda*. It regards both identity (*abheda*) and difference (*bheda*) as separate and equally real. God is both the material and the efficient cause of the universe. He is the efficient cause because creation is nothing but the real manifestation of powers of *ćit* and *aćit*. It is to be noted that Nimbārka rejects the view that matter and souls are the attributes since the function of attributes is always to distinguish one object from another object, and there

being nothing outside God, the so-called attributes have no function to fulfil. Moreover, they do not throw any light on the nature of God because they do not constitute His essence. Hence, Nimbārka calls matter and souls as the 'power' or 'energy' of God. God has four forms *(Vyuhas)* viz., *Vāsudeva*, *Sankarsana*, *Pradyumna* and *Aniruddha*, and appears under various incarnations such as *Matsya*, *Kurma*, *Vārāha* etc. God is identified with *Krišna* whose consort is *Rādhā*.

Ramanuja's view of soul-body relation between God and the world of matter and souls is also rejected by Nimbārka. If matter and souls are regarded as body of God, then God will be contaminated by the imperfection, miseries, and pains of the world and thus lose His pure nature. Besides, it would involve self-contradiction inasmuch as God as soul is said to remain eternal, unchanging and perfect, while as body He undergoes change and imperfection.

## *SELF*

### Substantive Mode of Brahman

According to Rāmānuja, the self is part of the body of God, or a mode (*Prakara*) of the Divine substance. It is atomic in size, and is characterised by knowledge, bliss and volition. In its pure state it possesses all the auspicious qualities in common with God except that it is not all-pervading and has no control over the universe. Though it is controlled by the soul, yet being a unique centre of experience it maintains its distinct existence from *Brahman*. It is "an inseparable attribute of the infinite as its *aprthaksiddha-višeshana* or *prākara*, but is at the same time a separate self, persevering in its own being." The peculiarity of this *višeshna* is that it is both substance and quality. "As quality or mode it derives its substantiality from the self-effulgent Ātman, but as substance, it has its own monadic being." As P. N. Srinivasachāri remarks, "This view has the merit of avoiding the monadic exclusiveness of Leibnitz and the modal inclusiveness of Spinoza." "*Tat tvam asi*" does not mean that the individual soul is absolutely identical with *Brahman*, but it denotes simply the

substance-attribute relation between *Brahman* and the individual soul and it is only in the metaphorical sense that the apposition is to be understood. The individual soul is *Brahman* only so far as it is a part of *Brahman* and resembles it in nature.

## Identity Qualified by Difference

The relation between soul and God is that of identity qualified by difference (*Visistādvaita*). The soul is a mode of God who is its inner self (*antaryāmin*). It is organically related to the *Brahman* and yet it has its own individuality and merely qualifies it. Pure identity and pure difference are equally abstractions. It is identity qualified by difference that is concrete and meaningful. This view is to be distinguished from the *Bhedābhedavāda* of Nimbārka according to which there is identity as well as difference between God and Self, such that both are on a par with each other.

## *Dharma-bhüta-jnāna,* Essential Property of Self

Self is eternal, uncreated and imperishable. It is a substance possessing *dharma-bhūta-jñana* as its essential attribute. Knowledge or consciousness being its essential property persists even in deep sleep. In its pure state, the self has infinite and all-pervasive knowledge, but in the state of bondage its knowledge is obscured by its Karmas. It is a real Knower (*jñātā*), real agent (*Kartā*) and real enjoyer (*bhoktā*). It is self-conscious subject in the sense that it knows itself. But being self-luminous, the self manifests itself without the aid of knowledge. It however, requires the aid of knowledge for revealing its object. Thus, self knows itself as well as its object. Bliss also constitutes the essential property of the self. It is *ānandasvarupa*. Therefore, miseries of *samsāra* do not affect it in its-essence.

## Embodiment Due to *Avidya-Karma*

Rāmānuja regards self as different from its body, sense organs, mind and vital breaths. At the time of creation self becomes embodied according to its Karmas in order to reap the fruits

thereof. The relation of self and its *Karma* being beginningless, it has to take on a body in the beginning of every cycle of creation until it gets liberation from the rounds of birth and death. It wrongly identifies itself with body, senses and mind etc. due to ignorance and *Karma*, develops ego-sense (*ahamkāra*), and undergoes worldly sufferings.

## Classes of Souls

There are three classes of souls according to Rāmānuja. Firstly, there are the nitya-mukta or ever-free souls of gods like *Śesha*, *Garuda* etc. who are untouched by *Karma* and *Prakrti* and reside in *Vaikuntha* in constant service of the Lord *Vāsudeva*. Secondly, there are mukta or liberated souls who have got rid of their bondage through their efforts, knowledge and devotion. Thirdly, there are baddha or bound souls who are subjected to samsara on account of their *avidyā-karma*.

## Nimbārka's View of the Self

According to Nimbārka the individual soul is of the nature of knowledge or pure consciousness (*Jñānasvarāpa*), but it is also regarded as the real knower (*Jñāta*) or the possessor of knowledge. Just as the sun is both light and the source of light, in the same way self can legitimately be conceived to be both knowledge and the substratum of knowledge simultaneously. Following Rāmānuja, Nimbārka also regards soul as atomic in size and maintains it to be real knower, agent and enjoyer. The self becomes oblivious of its real eternal nature owing to its contact with *Karma* resulting from beginningless avidyā, and suffers births and deaths on account of its embodiment. The existence, knowledge and agency of the self, however, depend on the will of God ultimately. This quality of being dependent on God (*niyamyatva*) is the very nature of self even in the state of liberation. Self is thus dependent on God, is supported by God and is controlled by God from within.

Though the self is atomic in size, it can experience pleasure and pain in various parts of the body through omnipresent knowledge, which exists in it as its essential attribute. Nimbārka's characterization of the relation between self and *Brahman* takes the form of *Bhedābheda*. Self and *Brahman* cannot be absolutely identical because firstly, such a thought contradicts those Upanishadic passages, which speak of duality and difference between them. Secondly, this involves a confusion of their respective nature and attributes. The concept of absolute difference too is not applicable to the mutual relation of self and Brahman, for that goes against the passages like '*Tat tvam asi*' and '*Aham Brahmāsmi*'. Therefore, the synthetic view that both the difference and the non-difference are equally real is alone true. Self is different from *Brahman* on account of its distinct attributes and capacities, and it is non-different from *Brahman* because being its constituent part or energy it is dependent on it. Thus, the copula '*asi*' in '*tat tvam asi*' signifies a relation between *Brahman* and self which is difference not inconsistent with non-difference. Fire and its sparks, or sun and its lustre are analogies fit to express the idea involved herein.

## Bondage and Liberation of the Self

Rāmānuja holds that the self though resembling the *Brahman* in its original form nevertheless enters the *Samsāra* due to ignorance, and suffers. The self as the self-conscious subject that is eternally free or blissful has *Brahman* as its source and centre. But owing to the influence of *avidyā-karma* whose origin cannot be temporally or logically explained, the self forgets its divine heritage, imagines itself to be the mode of matter, and is caught up in the endless Cycle of birth and death. At the time of Creation *Brahman* associates the individual soul with a body suitable to its deserts and makes it experience, misery and happiness in accordance with its previous karmas.

Liberation consists in the return of the soul from the becoming of *Samsāra* to the being of *Brahman* and in the direct intuition of *Brahman* or *Vāsudeva*. This becomes possible only by a harmonious combination of action and knowledge

(*jñānakarmasamuccaya*). Disinterested discharge of social and religious duties, help the soul in removing the effects of its Karmas. But mere performance of duties cannot lead to liberation. The bound soul has to acquire right knowledge about the nature of *Brahman* as its inner ruler, and its own nature as the body of *Brahman*. Real knowledge does not occur by merely studying the *Vedānta*, but by intense devotion (*Bhakti*) which, consists in self-surrender (*prapatti*) and constant remembrance of God as the sole object of devotion (*dhruvasmriti)*. Self-surrender to and incessant meditation on God mature into highest *Bhakti*, which is identical with *Brahma-Sākṣātkāra* or the immediate infinite knowledge of God. When the soul sees the brilliant self by Divine grace (*prasāda*), it casts off *avidyā- karma*, knows that his self is a *prakāra* or *śarira* of *Brahman* and thereby attains liberation. Even in the State of Liberation the individual soul maintains its separate identity from *Brahman*. It does not become identical with *Brahman*, but only similar to *Brahman*. "The *mukta* is immersed in the supreme and unsurpassable bliss of *Brahmānubhava* without losing *his* self being."

## Nimbārka's View on Bondage and Liberation

According to Nimbārka, the self- being the part of energy of God is dependent on Him and controlled by Him from within. Bondage consists in forgetfulness of its aspect of unity with God on the part of the self. Consequently, the self feels itself independent in all its actions and experiences. Self's avidyā or ignorance of its nature and its relationship with God is the cause of its *Karma* and its association with body, senses and subtle matter. Thus, the self suffers births and deaths on account of *Karma* and *avidyā*.

Liberation can be attained by the self through knowledge of the nature of God and of one's true relationship with Him. True knowledge can arise only by the grace of God, which in turn requires unswerving devotion to the Lord. Devotion consists in continual and unflinching meditation on the nature of God. It is only by complete surrender to God (*Prapatti*) that devotion (*Bhakti*) can spring up. The process of surrender runs through six

stages-a resolution to yield (*ānukūlasya samkalpah*), the avoidance of opposition (*pratikulasya varjanam*), a faith that God will protect (*rakshiśyatiti Visvāsah*), acceptance of Him as saviour (*goptrtva varanam*), throwing one's soul upon Him (*ātma-Vikshepah*) and a sense of helplessness (*kārpanya*). Like Rāmānuja, Nimbārka also recommends the performance of regular caste and āsrama duties because they help the rise of Wisdom. Thus, ultimate wisdom consists in realising the nature of God and participating in Him as His constituent. The self then feels itself to be absolutely controlled and regulated by God, and abides in Him as a part of His energy. The liberated self becomes free from the influence of all his good or bad past karmas and remains unaffected by any action that may be performed in future.

According to Nimbārka there is no ontological fusion of self in God in the state of liberation. The emancipated self exists in God as His distinct energy and may again be employed by Him for His own purposes. Though the liberated beings become me one with God, they have no control over the affairs of the world.

According to Rāmānuja, Brahman who is both the material end efficient cause of the world has got a subtle condition and a gross condition. In its subtle condition it contains the *acit* (matter) and (souls) in their imperceptible form as its body and is called the *Karana-Brahma*, while in its gross condition it manifest itself in the form of this world consisting of matter and souls as visible to the mortal eyes and is called the *Karya-Brahma*. Creation or destruction are nothing but the cyclic passage of the Brahaman from its subtle condition to the gross condition of the *Kāran-Brahma* into *Kārya-Brahma*. This is known as the theory of *Brahma-Parināmavāda* as opposed to the *Brahma-Vivartavāda* doctrine of *Śaṃkara*.

Ramanuja includes three kinds of unconscious substances in the catgory of *acit* viz; *Prakrti*, *Nitya-Vibhuti* and *Kalā*. *Prakrti* is the source of the world of ordinary matter. It has tree qualities of *sattav*, *rajas* and *tamas* in it. Being the body of God it is completely dependent on Him and controlled by Him. At the time of creation, the world of matter evolves out of *Prakrti*. *Nitya-*

*Vibhuti* which is made of pure *sattava*(*suddhasattava*) is the stuff of divine bodies, divine ornaments, divine city (*Vaikuntha*) and Holy Idols. Kala is the unconscious substance having its own status along with *Prakrti*.

Created world of matter and souls is absolutely real, because it is real transformation of the body of God or *Brahman*. Matter and souls are realities which are co-eternal with God. Creation is nothing but the evolution of subtle *Prakrti* into gross elements and the embodiment of souls according to their respective karmas. It takes place in order to enable the souls to reap the fruits of their past karmas. It is therefore rooted in the Law of *Karma*, which again is nothing but an expression of the Divine Will. Thus, matter and souls are neither created nor destroyed by God.

Nimbarka holds that creation is nothing but the manifestation of *ćit* and *ać it* that are the constituent parts or powers (*śaktis*) of God. It is, however, a real transformation (*parināma*) of God's powers. God brings about creation for enabling the souls to reap the fruits of their previous karmas. Thus, God is the ultimate efficient cause of the created world, which is at once identical with and different from Him. In the category of Ać it three kinds of existents are comprised, viz., *Aprākrta*, *Prākrta* and *Kalā*. The *Aprākrta* is the primordial matter that is underived from *Prakrti* e.g., the sun-like refulgence of God, His abode and His ornaments etc. *Prākrta* is that which is derived from *Prakrti*, consisting of three gunas - *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, such as *Mahat*, *Ahamkāra*, *Manas* etc. These three non-intelligent existents in their subtle essence are beginningless and eternal and have distinct though dependent existence on *Brahman*.

## Critical Estimate

Although these *Vaiśnava* philosophies claim to be based on the teaching-of the Upanisads, yet they have all failed to absorb the mystical thought so prominent in the Upanisads. This is significant. In fact, the founders of these systems came to philosophy with covert intention of finding a rational justification for their preconceived theological notions and traced the roots of

their thought to the Upanisads in order simply to exploit the immense prestige of the latter to further their own ends. In words of Prof. Hiriyanna, it was thus practical exigency rather than any organic connection between the two teachings that led to their synthesis."[6] Consequently, they not only give a forced and artificial interpretation to the frankly monistic tenets of the *Upanisads*, but also draw frequently on the non-Upanisadic literature to make good their point. While they pay only a nominal homage to the Upanisads, they have usually to fall back upon the *Bhāgavata*, the *Vishnupurāna* and the *Pancarātra* in order to substantiate their position.

Now while considering the *Viśistādvaita* of Rāmānuja, we have first to challenge epistemological position of that system. If Rāmānuja is correct in holding that knowledge always reveals differences and that an undifferentiated *Brahman* so-called, being beyond the purview of all means of knowledge, is an abstraction, then the fate of monism and mysticism is really sealed once for all. But facts have a different story to tell. Knowledge cannot be artificially restricted to the subject-predicate scheme of Rāmānuja's epistemology. As Bradley has pointed out, the existence of an infra-relational experience on the one hand, and the evidence of the higher supra-relational immediacy on the other, are sufficient to dispose of the monopolistic pretensions of the relational type of knowledge. Rāmanuja forgets to take into account the knowledge by intuition, which transcends the subject-object relation in a supreme insight and reveals a reality that is above and beyond relation. His further argument that, the advaitic *Brahman* can not be regarded as a supra-relational unity because it has got attributes of infinity, eternity, self-luminosity and unity amounts to a verbal jugglery and fails to carry the point. Surely, eternity does not belong to *Brahman* just as, for instance, 'whiteness' belongs to jar. It is a travesty of truth to say that the Absolute is degraded to the empirical level represented by the substance-attribute relation simply because it is called eternal, infinite and self-luminous.

The Viśistādvaitic conception of Reality as a soul-body complex in which Brahman is the soul of which the animates and

the inanimates are the body, is too crude to deserve the name of philosophy. Is Brahman then only a part of the Reality—its internal or antaryämin aspect? Or, is it co-extensive with Reality? In the former case, Brahman-ceases to be infinite, omnipresent and omnipotent and seems to be at the most a finite God or the *Primus Inter Pares.* In the latter case, the soul-body analogy breaks, thereby shaking the whole of the Viśiśtādvaitic concept of reality to its very foundations. Further, the concept of Brahman as a person possessing an infinite number of auspicious attributes is more an indication of anthropomorphism, than an evidence of philosophic-mindedness. Here Rāmānuja and Nimbārka give way to a timid theology, and in their enthusiasm to rehabilitate religion succeed in serving the cause neither of philosophy nor of true religion. The highest religion consist not in an endless adoration of a Personal Deity who remains for ever an 'other' to the devotee, but in that supreme process of mystic contemplation in which the distinction between the Deity and the devotee vanishes in the self-same identical life wherein Being bears witness to Being.

Rāmānuja's position that the individual souls though completely dependent on *Brahman* yet remain eternally distinct from *Brahman* is self-contradictory. Srinivãsãcãri holds that the above view of the finite-self has the merit of avoiding the defects of Leibnizean monadism on the one hand and Spinozistic 'mode' ism on the other, while synthesizing the-elements of truth contained in both. But synthesis achieved at the cost of self-consistency is no commendable feat in metaphysics. The individual self is said to constitute the body and the mode of Brahman and at the same time it is imagined to maintain its separate monadic existence. To this end the individual is conceived to have at once a two-fold nature as *dravyaguna* or Substance-attribute. Now one and the-same entity simultaneously possessing a two-fold ontological status is a standing example of the discrepancies inherent in the Vishistãdvaitic system. Rāmānuja's attempt to give a forced interpretation of the Upanisadic *mahāvākya* '*tat-tvam-asi*' to bring it into harmony with his view only makes the confusion worse confounded. It is contended that just as 'whiteness' belongs as an attribute to the jar, so does the jiva belong to Brahman as its attribute. But an

attribute by its nature is meant to distinguish the thing that possesses the attribute from another that is without it. In the present context there is nothing from which Brahman as the bearer of jiva as its attribute should be distinguished. Moreover, if the jiva is existentially dependent on Brahman, it is not easy to see how the distinction between the two can be ultimate.

Rāmanuja cannot in the same breath assert the utter dependence - logical, ontological and teleological—of the attributive elements viz., *cit* and *acit*, on *Brahman* and insist on their claims to distinctive status. If words have meaning, then to say that cit and acit are not self-sufficient and independent is as much as to admit that they are not ultimate, and hence they cannot survive as elements of diversity in the Absolute. The notion of *aprthaksiddhi* on which Rāmānuja tries to base his whole concept of a complex *Brahman* is as imperfect as that of the *Nyāya- Vaisesika samavāya.* As Prof. Hiriyanna has pointed out, "the only difference is that while *samavāya* tries to unite what are supposed to be distinct, *aprthaksiddhi* tries to separate what is supposed to be one. Both alike represent efforts to seek what it is not possible to have, viz., a halfway house between inclusion and exclusion"[7].

We find one more inconsistency lurking in the concept of *Kārana-Brahma* and *Kārya-Brahma.* It is asserted that the evolution and involution of the universe is nothing but the passage of Brahman from the subtle causal condition to the gross effect-condition. It is further emphasised that this transformation of *Brahman* from the *Kārana* to the *Kārya* state is real. But the idea of a real transformation of Brahman goes against the eternal perfection of the same. The argument that it is only the body-aspect of the Brahman that undergoes modification while the soul-aspect remains unchanged, far from solving the difficulty only leads to *reductio ad absurdum* of his whole position. It is quite unintelligible how the substance can remain unchanged even while its inseparable (*aprthak*) attributes are undergoing constant modification. *Parināmavāda* and the idea of changing *Brahman* are inseparably connected, and Rāmānuja's protest that the change is only to be secondarily (*sadvaraka*) understood, can be of no avail.

The doctrine of liberation as consisting of the *sārūpya* between the *jiva* and the *Brahman* is seen to be uninspiring and insufficient from 'the highest view-point'. It cannot be too much emphasized that to know *Brahman* as the ultimate ground of both the microcosm and the macrocosm is simultaneously to lose one's own limited monadic existence, and to attain Brahmanhood in ecstatic mystic experience. The logical terminology is as poor and incompetent to convey the highest experience of *Brahma-sakšātkāra* as is the empirical analogy of *Sārūpya*. One does not understand what justification the jiva's distinct existence has and what peculiar function it has still to perform, when once it has realised that *Brahman* is its true and the highest self, and that it is the alpha and the omega of all existence. Both logic and experience despite Rāmānuja unite in pointing out that the mystic identity of the jiva and the *Brahman* is the supreme end sought by morality, metaphysics and religion alike.

Nimbarka's *Bhedābheda* differs from *Viśistādvaita* only in point of emphasis, for while the latter subordinates plurality to unity, the former attempts to treat both as the coordinate elements of the Real. But the resulting scheme of Reality turns out to be the same as that chalked out by Rāmānuja. Rāmānuja endeavoured to solve the problem of one and the many by conceiving *Brahman* as a substance attribute complex in which attributes through their manifestation and non-manifestation were responsible for producing the spiritual and material worlds, while the substance remained changeless and one amid all change and diversity. Nimbārka substitutes word '*Śaktis*' or energies for attributes and accounts for the change and diversity of universe by referring to the passage of the Brahmanic energies from subtlety to grossness. Here we may incidentally note that Vallabha also does not materially differ from Rāmānuja and Nimbārka on this important point, for he considers Brahman's '*Aiśvarya*' to be the Origin and Source of multiplicity and change. Now it is palpable that *guna, sakti* and *aisvarya* are the replicas of an identical mode of thought which, is monistic by profession but dualistic in reality. It is not easy to understand how if the *guna, saktis* and *aisvarya* of Brahman undergo modification Brahman itself can remain

unchanged and identical. The obvious lesson is that the problem of the one and the many, of change-and causality cannot be satisfactorily explained by the doctrine of real transformation or *parināmavāda*. This doctrine is an attempt to reconcile common sense and philosophy by a crude device in which the whole is imagined to remain unaffected even while its vital parts are subjected to ceaseless modification.

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# *Concept of Liberation in Gnosticism, Neoplatonism and the Gītā**

Concept of Liberation or Redemption is the central concept of any philosophical or religious system worth the name. The human condition throughout the ages has been a condition of some sort of suffering, and yet every thinking man has intimations from the depths of his being that his original nature is characterised by freedom, perfection and bliss, he has fallen from that nature due to some metaphysical and moral lapses on his part. The human quest for salvation from the existential predicament of bondage and suffering has found expression in the philosophical speculations of Lord Krisna, Yājñavalkya. Kapil, Buddha, Mahāvira, and Śaṃkarāćārya among the oriental sages. And of Pythagoras, Socrates, Jesus Christ. Valentinus and Augustine among the Occidental seers. So far as the Indian philosophical systems are concerned, it has been universally recognised that the motive force behind their speculations has been the search for Moksha or Liberation. But the historians of Western Philosophy have generally highlighted only those ancient and modern philosophers who conceive philosophy as purely an intellectual exercise unrelated to the existential problem of the redemption of human condition. They castigate the philosophers of Neoplatonic and Gnostic schools because of the concern of these schools with the problems of God, human soul and its salvation. They also call the period of Middle Ages as the Dark Age for Philosophy because medieval philosophers were guided in their speculations by the truths revealed in Christianity. Such an estimate of the Neoplatonic, Gnostic and Medieval philosophers on the part of historians of Philosophy is evidently an expression of their deep-rooted prejudice against every attempt to highlight the central problems of God, human soul and its salvation.

Gnosticism, which combines Christian teaching with a higher esoteric knowledge (gnosis) flourished in the first two centuries of our present era. 'Gnosis' is a supra-rational knowledge gained

by a mystical intuition regarding the original nature of the human self, its fall from that nature, its present predicament and the manner of its redemption. The characteristic feature of 'Gnosis' consists in an immediate vision of truth, direct first-hand apprehension of the nature of God and communion with Him. The attainment of the vision of God depends on the fulfillment of two conditions. Firstly, the aspirant must possess a heart that has been purified by the practice of asceticism. Secondly, there should be a powerful Master who is able to reveal the 'Gnosis' to the disciple because he himself has realised the same.

However, the significance of 'Gnosis' has to be understood on the background of the dualistic metaphysics of 'Spirit and Matter,' which was ultimately derived from the Zoroastrian principles of Light and Darkness. Gnosticism conceives God as the abstract ground of all existence. God as the supreme reality stands at the summit of the universe. He is not regarded as a personal Deity. Rather, He is the ineffable ultimate Principle called as the Pure Light, the Abyss, the Unknowable, and the Transcendent. This unbegotten Reality is the source of all being and becoming, the Father of all. From Him proceed a number of beings in descending scale of reality arranged in pairs of male and female (*syzgies*) which in their totality make up the '*Pleroma*' or the fullness of the Divine Being. According to Valentinus, the members of *Pleroma* bear the name of *Aeons* and are created in successive pairs by a process of emanation. The member or *Aeon* called *Sophia* who stands lowest in the process of emanation has a fall from the *Pleroma* and sinks in the darkness of the world of Matter. Gnosticism speculates that *Demiurge*, the Jewish God who is a son of *Sophia*, creates the world of Matter, which is evil principle and governs it like a tyrant keeping the soul in the bondage of material existence. The soul in bondage has to await the arrival of an *Aeon* of supreme rank (the *Sorter* or *Christus*) for deliverance. This compassionate *Aeon* not only frees *Sophia* from bondage of Matter but he picks up the seeds of Divine Light scattered in the dark world of Matter and ultimately reascends into the *Pleroma* accompanied by *Sophia*. According to Christian Gnosticism, the Redeemer is none else but Christ. However, this Christ, who is the heavenly Redeemer, remains distinct from the historical Jesus

who was a person endowed with preeminently spiritual nature. The *Naassenes* believed that the union of the heavenly Christ and the historical Christ took place at the time of the birth of Jesus; but according to the Justinian sect, this union occurred when Jesus was twelve years of age or when he was baptised. Before crucifixon, the Divine Christ separates Himself from Jesus. By means of the knowledge imparted by Christ as preserved in the Gnostic tradition, the higher natures are liberated from the earthly bondage and restored to the Kingdom of Light. In brief, the basis of Gnostic metaphysics is the belief that a spiritual essence has come to be imprisoned within the body which is radically alien to it, hence there is a need for a redemption to be achieved by some divine power. The captive soul is thereby enabled to escape into a world of freedom by circumventing the hostile planetary powers by means of the secret discipline and knowledge, which are the hallmark of Gnosticism. The soul that is thus freed from its limitations is reunited with the *Pleroma* in blessedness and perfection. However, such redemption is reserved for a limited number of chosen spirits who alone are capable of the redeeming 'gnosis'. Other persons of the grosser make-up do not deserve any sort of deliverance and God is not responsible for them.

The Gnostic doctrines became overlaid by an occult lore, which consisted of participation in mysterious rites and instruction in magical watchwords and secret words. This praxis was supposed to help the captive soul in its efforts to shake off its material fetters. Besides this, an elaborate mythus was also developed as a supplement to the praxis. But freed from the occult praxis and mythus, Gnosticism's central idea seems to be the re-ascent of the fallen soul through successive stages of being. Its ultimate object is the individual salvation.

Just as the Gnostics endeavour to offer a philosophy of nascent Christianity, the Neo-platonic philosophers attempt to construct a religious world-view or theosophy within the framework of Plato's philosophy. According to Plotinus, God is the source of all existence, absolutely transcendent, pure Unity prior to all thought and being. He is the causeless Cause of everything because from Him everything emanates and yet the notion of causality does not

apply to Him. "Generative of all, the Unity is none of all; neither thing nor quantity nor soul; not in motion, not in rest, not in place, not in time; it is self-defined, unique in form or, better, formless, existing before Form was, or Movement or Rest, all or which are attachments of Being and Being the manifold it is".[1] The world owes its existence to God and yet it can neither be regarded as creation of or evolution from God. It is an emanation from God, an irresistible overflow of His infinite power and perfection. Just as light radiates from the Sun without in any way exhausting its fullness, even so the world proceeds from God without any loss to His infinity and perfection. The cause does not pass over into or lose itself in its effect. In the process of emanation from God, it is the Intellectual-Principle or Nous that comes first, then comes Soul and at the end comes Matter. This emanation is a procession from the perfect to the imperfect. The farther down we go in the scale of being, every later stage is more and more imperfect because it is a copy of its preceding stage. But every later stage also looks back to its source in the preceding stage and finds its purpose or goal in it. The Intellectual-Principle is an Intellectual Cosmos containing all the manifold ideas of the phenomenal world in a unified system. It contemplates intuitively its ideas all at once. It also contemplates the Godhead. From the Intellectual-Principle proceeds the World Soul as a faded out copy of the former. It is outside time, incorporeal and indivisible. It operates rationally and yet it is not conscious. It has two aspects, the one inclining towards the Intellectual-Principle and the other looking downwards to the world of Matter. Out of the World Soul emerge the individual souls. At the limit of emanation comes the Matter which being farthest removed from God is utter darkness and evil. It is of the nature of non-being and serves as the ground of all plurality. Matter "is utter destitution of sense, of virtue, of beauty, of pattern, of Ideal principle, of quality. This is surely ugliness, disgracefulness, unredeemed evil. By its alienism in regard to beauty and good of existence, Matter is therefore a non-existent."[2] It serves as the material out of which the Soul fashions the particular sensible objects in space and time as sensuous images of the intelligible world contained in the Intellectual-Principle.

The Human Soul being a part of the World Soul is incorporeal and free. In its original nature it contemplated the Intellectual-Principle in mystical intuition, and was inclined God-ward. But due to its incorporation in the body and its impulse towards the sensuous life, it fell from its original free nature and became involved in life of sin in preference to the contemplative life. It can regain its pure contemplative nature wedded to God only by turning from sensuous life to the life of contemplation.

The escape from material world and exaltation to God constitutes the goal of life. This goal is attained through four stages of purification or Katharsis of the soul from everything earthly by cultivation of moral virtues, training in discursive philosophical thinking, intuitive ascent to the Intellectua Principle, and the final exaltation into God or Unity by means of trance, rapture or ecstasy. The soul is identified with God in ecstasy, but such raptures are only momentary. As Plotinus puts it, "the beholder becomes one with the beheld it was not a vision encompassed but a Unity apprehended...This is life of gods and of godlike and blessed among men, liberation from the alien that besets its here, a life taking no pleasure in the things of earth, the passing of solitary to Solitary."[3]

In the context of Gnosticism and Neoplatonism, when we come to the consideration of the *Bhagavadgītā*, we encounter the same sublime theme of the alienated Human Soul seeking to regain its unity with God. Arjuna typifies the benighted and bewildered soul groping for redemption. He goes to the Lord Krişna in the spirit of surrender befitting a disciple before the Master and makes Him an earnest appeal for instructing him in regard to his Duty, and the true goal of human life.[4] Lord Krişna tells Arjunaa that the root-cause of all human suffering and bondage is man's ignorance of his real nature as the *Ātman* or the *Brahman*: hence the sovereign remedy for curing the chronic human malady' is the cultivation of the *Brahma-Vidyā* or the realization of the *Brahman* or the *Ātman*. According to the *Gītā*, the *Brahman* is the one ultimate spiritual Reality, which is at once Personal (*Saguna*) and Impersonal (*Nirguna*). As Impersonal or *Nirguna*, the *Brahman* is the imperishable Reality by which all this is spread out. Neither is He

born, nor does He die; neither at any time having come into being, will He cease to be again: being unborn, eternal, everlasting Since antiquity, he is not killed, though the body is killed.[5] He is eternal, all pervading, steadfast, inconceivable and immutable.[6] As Personal or *Saguna*, He is the best Puruśa of all (*Puruśottama*), known as the *Paramātman*, the imperishable Lord, who having entered into the three worlds, sustains them.[7] It is His *Prakrti* in its lower (*aparā*) and higher (*parā*) aspects that has created the world of matter and empirical selves (*Jivās*) and sustains it. All thought and being are strung on Him like beads on a thread.[8] He is the origin of the entire world and in Him it is dissolved again.[9] He resides in the hearts of all beings, and He is before the beginning, in the middle and also after the end of all beings. He has infinite powers and manifestations.[10] Having pervaded this world by a fraction of Himself, He remains transcendent.[11]

It is on the background of this metaphysical thought that Lord Krişna tells Arjunaa that the latter's all-consuming sorrow (śoka) over the possible killing of his kith and kin on the battle-field was the result of his excessive attachment to the material side of life (*moha*) which again was due to his ignorance (*avidyā*) of the *Ātman*. The '*Dehin*' or *Ātman* is the infinite, eternal, unborn and imperishable reality which alone exists before the beginning, in the middle and after the end, while the '*Deha*' or body is merely an ephemeral appearance or '*vyakta-madhya*' behind which there is infinity and before which also there is infinity viz., the *Ātman* or the *Brahman*. Where is then the room for grief ?[12] When this, *Ātman* or *Brahman* is realised, it becomes evident that body and the material side of life and world are evanescent appearances on the *Brahman*. This redeeming knowledge of the *Ātman* or *Brahman* can be realised by the faculty of Intuition or *Buddhi-Yoga*, which is awakened by the grace of God or the powerful Master who has himself realised the *Brahman*.[13] With the attainment of the *Brahma-Vidyā* man is not only enabled to achieve freedom from the good or bad effects of his actions, but also from the bondage of birth and death. Such a *Brahmayogin* or the realiser of the *Brahman* has to cultivate ethical virtues and train his intellect, feeling and willing by undergoing the discipline of *Jñāna-yoga*, *Bhakti-yoga* and *Karma-yoga* respectively. The

liberated individual combines contemplation (*Jñāna*) and action (*karma*) by virtue of which he is a denizen of two worlds, the spiritual and the material. He remains in unison with *Brahman* or God by transcending the three gunas of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, and fulfils his obligation to his fellow-beings by helping them morally and spiritually. He remains unperturbed as a rock inspite of the greatest calamity.[14] He is also occasionally expected to be tumultuously busy in the affairs of the world, in the wars of the nations, in the assemblages of saints, and among the afflicted and the sinners, with a view to lift them up and bring them on the path of God." He performs actions while renouncing their motives and fruits (*niṣkāma karma*) and dedicating them to God.

We have now before us the views of Gnosticism, Neoplatonism and the *Bhagavadgītā* on the sublime theme of the ultimate reality of God or the Absolute, the original divine nature of the human soul, the fall of the human soul from its divine nature and the redemption of the human soul. Apart from the common theme, there are also common elements in these three systems. All of them posit the supremacy of the Spirit over Matter, the essentially spiritual nature of the human soul, the existential predicament of the human soul in the condition of its fall, the indispensability of the ethico-spiritual discipline, and of the grace of the Spiritual Teacher for redemptive self-realization, and the intuitive vision of God and unison with Him as the be-all and end-all of human existence. Gnosticism sets much store by a secret and mystical knowledge (*gnosis*) and thereby a direct vision of God and communion with Him. It is based on a frankly dualistic metaphysics of Spirit and Matter. God is conceived as the absolutely transcendent reality from whom issue the Aeons by a process of emanation. The evil world of matter is created by the *Demiurge*, which holds the fallen soul in the captivity of the material existence. Deliverance of the soul depends on its purification through the practice of asceticism and the arrival of the Redeemer who is none else but Christ. However, redemption is earmarked for only a limited number of chosen souls. Men of the grosser type have no chance of getting redemption. It is clear that the chief defects of Gnosticism are ultimate and irreconciliable dualism of *Pleroma* and *Demiurge*, of Spirit and

Matter, its asceticism, its eternal denial of redemption to the souls of grosser type, and its mythus concerning esoteric rites and rituals as the precondition of the acquisition of saving knowledge, or Gnosis. The Neoplatonism of Plotinus is palpably more logical in its metaphysics in comparison to Gnosticism. God or the Good is the indefinable, eternal causeless cause of all being and becoming. The world of Matter is conceived as the limit of the process of emanation from God. It is of the nature of privation, and does not possess an independent status along with God. Thus the Neoplatonic metaphysics does not break into dualism, as is the case with the Gnostic metaphysics. Neoplatonism is also comparatively rational in its approach in contrast to the mythological overtones of Gnosticism, though Plotinus believed in the existence of good and evil demons in the sublunary regions. Moreover, unlike Gnosticism it does not deny salvation to any class of souls eternally, so that any soul can aspire for it. However, some glaring inadequacies of Neoplatonism emerge to our view when it is juxtaposed with the doctrine of liberation enunciated in the Gitā. Metaphysically, the God of Neoplatonism is absolutely impersonal and transcendent having no relation with the world of Matter, and this transcendence is reflected in the nature of the liberated soul inasmuch as he withdraws himself in complete isolation from the suffering humanity steeped in ignorance, sin and sorrow. In contrast to this, the God of Gitā is both impersonal and personal, transcending the world and at the same time pervading it. As a consequence of this, the liberated individual who becomes identified with God is able to combine detached contemplation with works directed to the moral and spiritual upliftment of the suffering humanity. Whereas in Neoplatonism the final goal of permanent unison with God is impossible of attainment in this very life, according to the *Gītā* liberation is attained finally in this very life by the *Brahmayogin* who lives and moves in the world as a jivanmukta serving the humanity even while he is lodged in the *Brahman*. Thus the *Gītā*, which has been aptly called by Professor R. D. Ranade as the Philosophy of God-realization, offers a doctrine of liberation, which answers to the highest aspirations of humanity.

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# *Ranade's Approach to the Theory of Truth*

The problem of Truth is, doubtless, the central problem of philosophy. Two distinct questions are involved in this problem *viz.*, what is the meaning of Truth? What is the criterion of Truth? But the philosophers have seldom kept this distinction in view while discussing the problem. Prof. Ranade did not propound any deliberate doctrine of Truth as such. Mysticism had been the subject close to his heart. He emphasised this fact at the end of his autobiographical essay 'The Evolution of My Own Thought' where he writes, "Spiritual life has been my aim from the beginning of my philosophic career; let me hope that it would be its culmination also"[1].

It is with this central purpose of justifying spiritual life philosophically that he made a deep study of Indian and European philosophies. As a consequence of this study, he formulated his own views on some of the main issues which were "on the anvil" of the Contemporary Philosophy in the fields of Metaphysics, Ethics, Psychology and Religion. The peculiarity of these formulations of Prof. Ranade is that, instead of presenting his views directly, he presents them through a process of criticism of the doctrines of other philosophers; and hence his views emerge obliquely to our view. A discerning eye which can read between the lines Prof. Ranade's works can separate his doctrines from the views of other philosophers discussed by him in his inimitable style.

Prof. Ranade is indeed a God-intoxicated philosopher for whom God (variously called as the Absolute, Spirit, Ātman or Self-consciousness) is the only Reality. Truth is only one and it is in God. Thus Truth, which is an epistemological concept, is identical with Reality which is ontological—Thought and Being are one in his monograph on "Aristotle's Criticism of Eleatics". Prof. Ranade propounded this fundamental idealistic thesis while giving his own interpretation of the philosophy of Parmenides, the great Greek ontological philosopher. He rejected the materialistic interpretation offered by Burnet, appreciated the Spinozistic

interpretation given by Gomperz, and finally proved beyond doubt that the "Poem" of Parmenides makes sense only when we understand its implied identification of the real with the rational. He argued that "As from the logical point of view, Parmenides asserted the unity of subject and predicate, so, from the metaphysical point of view, he asserts the unity of thought and being." The Parmenidean identification of Thought and Being seemed to him to be quite analogous to the Vedantic identification of "*Sat*" and "*Cit*".[2]

## Law of Relativism

Prof. Ranade held that the meaning of Truth can best be explained when Truth is regarded as the epistemological counterpart of the metaphysical reality of God. Truth is, therefore, absolute and one. There is no place for relativity and the so-called "degrees" of Truth. Prof. Ranade made this aspect of his doctrine of Truth clear in his classical monograph on Herakleitos. Herakleitos propounded the Law of Relativism by saying that there was no absolute distinction between night and day, between life and death, between good and bad. But Prof. Ranade saw that "there was a point at which relativism broke, namely at God, a fact acknowledged by Herakleitos himself". After arguing that the First Principle or God like man is subject to Relativism and is also beyond Relativism, Herakleitos concludes cryptically that "God is both day and night, war and peace, surfeit and hunger; but He takes various shapes, just as fire, when it is mingled with spices, is named according to the savour of each."[3]

Everyone gives God the "name he pleases". Prof. agrees with Herakleitos in this respect and formulates his view that the Law of Relativism is only applicable to the phenomenal world. So far as the Divine Life is concerned, it transcends Relativism. In this context, the Greek philosopher Protagoras was criticised by Prof.Ranade for his failure to see the inapplicability of the Law of Relativism to God. Relativism inevitably leads to scepticism in the field of value and truth, for there would be no difference between the judgment of the physician and the judgment of the ignorant quack in regard to a disease; similarly, it would be

equally true to say that "two plus two make four" and "two plus two make five"[4].

The denial of differences of values among things and of truth among judgments constitutes the *reductio ad absurdom* of Relativism. Prof. Ranade thus insists, "Truth is one, absolute, and immutable, and that is in God." From this point of view, it would be wrong to say that there are "degrees of truth". Absolute Truth being the norm (e.g., *"two* plus two make four"), any judgment that deviates from it would be more or less erroneous. Thus, there would be "degrees of error"- "two plus two make five" is less erroneous than "two plus two make a thousand."[5]

Having considered Prof. Ranade's doctrine that Truth is one, absolute and immutable, and is identical with Reality or God, we now come to his views regarding the criterion of Truth. The question of criterion is very difficult. Prof. Ranade recalls how "battles royal" have been fought concerning the criterion in the fields of Indian as well as European philosophy. "In Indian philosophy we have fought for *Pratyaksa* (direct evidence), *Anumāna* (inference), *Upamāna* (similarity or analogy), *Śabda* (authority) and so on. In European philosophy they fought in ancient times for catalepsia, self-consciousness, the unity of thought and being, apperception, absolute idea and so on."[6]

In Contemporary Philosophy we have so far three great schools of thought, each battling with the other with regard to the nature of the criterion. "The realistic criterion is correspondence, the idealistic criterion is coherence, and the pragmatic criterion is utility". However, leaving aside all these controversies among philosophers on the question of criterion, Prof. Ranade clinched the issue by pointing out that 'ultimately "it is our own experience that matters, and it is that experience that makes "Reality real". When Truth lies in Reality or God who is revealed in mystical experience, then it is the "mystical criterion" that must be regarded as the supreme touch-stone of judging Truth. Prof. Ranade has explained this criterion in its various significant aspects in all his important works.[7]

## Mystical Criterion

The mystical criterion is the supreme criterion of the truth of our experience of Reality or God because God being unique in relation to the phenomenal world (*dṛśya vilakṣana*), infinite in time and space, being the very prefection of knowledge and beatification, is "not understandable by word or mind" (*avanga manasāgoćar*). Prof. Ranade therefore, agrees with Bādarāyana, the author of the "*Brahma-Sutrās*" and also with Nijagunaśivayogi, the great Kannada saint that the existence of this unique, *Saccidānanda-svarupa* Reality can only be established on the authority of the scriptures (*śāstrayonitvat*) and their collaborative statements (*tattusamanvayāt*). The secret of Reality should be learnt from the Spiritual Teacher, who has himself become one with that Reality. The Upaniṣadic mystic Āruni Uddālaka, for instance, imparted this knowledge to his son Śvetaketu in the form of the *Mahāvākya* "Thou art That" (*tattvamasi*). But herculean moral and religious effort is needed before the secret Truth taught by the Spiritual Teacher is experienced directly by the disciple who is thereby able to declare 'I am Reality" (*So aham*).[8]

However, this unitive mystical experience is to be tested with the help of the mystical criterion which has been elucidated by Gurudev while explaining the famous line in the Bhagavadgita, '*Pratyakshavagamam dharmyam susukham kartum avyayam*' (Ch.IX, *shloka* 2). Firstly, mystical experience would be true only if it becomes an object of pratyaksa or supersensuous perception or intuition. Secondly, genuine mystical experience is (*susukham*) or is accompanied by beatification or bliss. 'This bliss is as much above what we call happiness as happiness is above pleasure. The bliss of a saint is as much above the happiness of Socrates as the happiness of Socrates is above the pleasure of a pig'. Thirdly, true mystical experience must be continuous (*avyaya*), growing and permanent, and must pervade all the states of consciousness, namely *jāgrti* (wakefulness), *svapna* (dream-state), *suṣupti* (state of deep sleep) and *turiyā* (state of super-consciousness). An experience that occurs today and is lost tomorrow is no real

experience at all. The mystical experience or the form we see, the *Anāhat Śabda* we hear must not desert us.[9]

Here we would like to make a mention of Prof. Ranade's unique doctrine of the Asymptotic Approximation to Reality. Reality being infinite in every way, man the finite creature, can only approximate to it more and more in his search for Truth. Though ontologically, Truth is identical with Reality, yet epistemologically or from the view point of man's knowledge or experience of Reality, it cam only go on asymptotically approaching Reality and is able to meet it at infinity. "The hyperbole never meets the asymptote, but goes on approaching it continually and meets it at infinity." Similarly, the mystic goes on progressively approaching God; even at highest stage of this approximation he falls short of the infinity and perfection of God. As Jñānesvara, the greatest among the mystics, says: "There is that difference between the fourteenth-day Moon and the full Moon or between the 14- carat piece of gold and the 24-carat piece of the same metal." Commenting on the epistemological significance of this doctrine of Prof. Ranade, Prof. V.H. Date says, "Professor Ranade's doctrine of Asymptotic Approximation to God or what can also be called as the theory of Approximation to Godhead is not so much a *via media* between two schools of thought which hold respectively that none can know God, and that God can be known in His entirety, but as a synthesis of the thesis that God can be known entirely and its antithesis that God cannot be so known by any human being."[10]

However, it must be noted that apart from its being a synthesis of the thesis of full fledged Gnosticism and the antithesis of Agnosticism, Prof. Ranade regards his doctrine of Asymptotic Approximation as a criterion of the Truth of mystic experience in the sense that it should grow from day to day and from year to year, and the ultimate result of this growth would be a sort of an asymptotic approximation to Reality. Mystical experience which does not continually grow may not be a genuine experience.

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# *The Concept of Man and Destiny in Contemporary Philosophy*

Philosophers through the ages have regarded the place of man in the Universe and his ultimate destiny as the two chief problems of vital concern to the humanity. Their reflections on the ontological and epistemological problems have not infrequently been motivated by and/or culminated in some conception of the meaning and significance of the universe in relation to the existence of man, his goal in life and his ultimate destiny. The early Vedic seers sang hymns in praise of gods, *Agni*, *Indra* and *Varuṇa* for the sake of the worldly prosperity of mankind (*abhyudaya*). The seeds of deeper reflection about the nature of the Universe and human destiny contained in the 'nāsdiya sūkta' and '*puruṣasūkta*' gradually sprouted and grew into the vast and gigantic tree of idealistic Monism of Upaniśads. The Upaniśadic seers probed deeply the internal nature of man as also the nature of the external universe, and arrived at the conceptions of the *Ātman* and *Brahman* as the realities underlying respectively the microcosm and the macrocosm. But their realization in experience that the Ātman and *Brahman* are identical in nature has provided the human race with the noblest philosophy about the infinite potentialities of man whose real destiny is to transcend the limitations of his body, vital force, mind and intellect so as to realize his true nature as the *Brahman* or *Saccidānanda*. The Upaniśadic teachings as systematized in the '*Brahma-Sūtras*' led to diverse interpretations by the five great Vedāntic Ācāryas. The interpretations chiefly centered on the questions of the relation of the individual to the *Brahman* or God, and the destiny of the individual. They ranged from the Śaṃkara's assertion of pure identity between the individual and the *Brahman* to Madhva's declaration of the ultimate duality between the two. Rāmānuja struck the middle-of-the-road path of qualified identity of the individual and *Brahman*. These differing concepts of the relation of the individual to Brahman had their ramifications as regards the destiny of the individual. In pure Monism, the individual's

destiny lies in his merger in *Brahman* (*Sāyujya mukti*). According to Dualism, the individual maintains his ultimate separation from Brahman in latter's domain (*Sālokya mukti*). In the scheme of Qualified Monism, the individual ultimately attains resemblance with the *Brahman* (*Sārupya mukti*), but maintains his separate individuality.

When we make a survey of the idealistic philosophies of Parmenides and Plato in the ancient Greek period, and those of Spinoza and Hegel in the modern period, and of the Neo-Hegelians in the period of the recent past, we again find the debate centering round the place and destiny of the individual in the context of the Absolute Reality. Among the philosophers of the recent past, Bradley believed that from the ultimate viewpoint, the finite individual is only an appearance, an abstraction born of limited vision, the "fall from *grace*", in theological terms. It is an adjective qualifying the only Substance i.e., the Absolute, and its impersonal absorption therein is the "final destiny and last truth of things". Bosanquet also emphasizes what he calls "the positive incoherence, self-rejection and self-contradiction of the finite personality," and declares, "I cannot believe that the supreme end of Absolute is to give rise to beings such as I experience myself to be." But Royce and Pringle-Pattison both lay stress on the "uniqueness" of the finite individual. The latter even goes to the extent of advocating the substantive nature of the finite self, conceiving it to be impenetrable in the manner (we may say) of the Leibnitzian "windowless monad." McTaggart excels Pringle-Pattison in championing the cause of the finite individual and regards the Absolute as a "society of the finite individuals".

There is also a concern among these Neo-Hegelians of the recent past for the status and destiny of the finite individual. Some among them, in the manner of Śaṃkara, advocate the ultimate merger of the finite individual in the life of the Absolute, while others in the manner of Rāmānuja and Mādhva, believe in the indefensible existence and value of the finite individual. William James, the pragmatist, was the first to criticize "the block universe" of the Absolute idealists which, in his opinion, left no room for the freedom and individuality of man. But even before

him, the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard revolted against Hegelianism mainly because in his view the existing individual was conceived by Hegel as merely a "moment" in the life of the Absolute He felt suffocated in the System that reduced the individual into a "paragraph" in the book of the Absolute.

In contemporary philosophy it is the Existentialists who have thoroughly analysed the nature of the existing individual and have concern for the destiny of man. Logical positivists, Linguistic Analysts and Phenomenologists have in their own way dealt with problems that do not even touch the fringe of the subject. They seem to be least concerned with the nature of man and his destiny. Logical Positivists take pride in the destruction of metaphysics which is the bed-rock of Philosophy. Linguistic Analysts gleefully compare the philosopher to a fly entrapped in a fly-bottle, i.e., a person who has become a victim of the language employed by himself. They analyse the philosopher's language in such a way that the problems that were to be solved are magically "dissolved". They congratulate themselves for showing the bewitched fly the way out of the fly-bottle. Phenomenologists have restricted themselves more or less to the discovery of a method for describing the phenomena that form the subject matter of philosophical reflection.

So the Existentialists alone pinpoint the chief philosophical problem of man and his destiny. They flourished between the two World Wars fought on the continent of Europe, and were witnesses to the sorry plight of the individual under totalitarian regimes that gained supremacy in Europe ravaged by the First World War. They revolted against the totalitarianism and collectivism that were depersonalizing and decimating the existing individual. They harked back to the philosophy of Kierkegaard that had made the subjectivity, ethical freedom and creativity of the individual as the vital topics for philosophical reflection. They rejected the traditional approach originating in the Essentialism of Plato that limited the study of man to the Ideal Form or Universal Essence of man constituted by animality and rationality. While the Platonic watchword was that the essence of man was prior to his existence, Existentialism reversing this

traditional Essentialism developed the thesis that "Existence is prior to essence". Existentialist philosophers stressed the theme that the existing individual man far from being a shadow of the Universal Man was the real man with all his freedom and creativity, hopes and fears, frustrations, trials and tribulations. It is the particular, existing and ethically choosing individual constantly transcending himself that occupies the central place in the philosophical reflections of contemporary philosophers wedded to Existentialism. Existentialists might differ among themselves regarding the existence of God, but they are unanimous in so far as their commitment to the primacy of the existing individual is concerned. Their supreme concern is with the problems connected with the value and destiny of the particular, existing, free individual who is being increasingly submerged in the totality represented by the party, the society, the state, the church and the class. The individuality and freedom of man are being destroyed by depersonalization and functionalization that are the hallmark of contemporary society. Every man is recognized simply by the class he represents and the function he performs. "He is a capitalist, a bourgeois, a proletariat: or he is a worker, a waiter or a teacher."

Thus the individual has become alienated from his authentic existence consisting in his freedom, self-creativity and self-responsibility. Existentialist philosophers have tried to focus our attention on the problems of this alienated individual. They analyze the existence of the individual man and his problems by becoming participants in existence and its problems, and illuminate the possibilities of human existence. They hope thereby to promote man's awareness of his authentic existence. The theistic existentialists like Kierkegaard, Jaspers and Marcel believe that the Individual can undo his state of alienation by freely recognizing his rooted-ness in the Transcendent Being or God. But the atheistic existentialists like Heidegger and Sartre insist that authentic existence can be regained by the individual only by acknowledging his own free and responsible nature as the creator of his own values as the guiding star through his existential journey.

The atheistic existentialist represented by Sartre holds that the *En-soi* or the objective world of being-in-itself is the fundamental reality. The *Pour-soi*, the human consciousness of the being-for-itself has emerged dêtrop simply as a fissure or hole in the inert, opaque *En-soi*. While the *En-soi* is the plenitude of being, the *Pour-soi* is non-being who recognizes himself as such only in contrast and separation from some being, as lack of being. Man is purely contingent nothingness or subjectivity engaged in a life-long struggle to unite himself with the *En-soi* or being in order to found his subjectivity on a secure basis. There is no God or universally obligatory moral law to guide man in making ethical choice. The very concept of God is self-contradictory because as infinite conscious Being, He is supposed to be a unity *of Pour-soi— En-soi* which is *ex-hyposi* an impossibility. Yet man as a lack of being sets before himself the fundamental project of desiring and appropriating being in some form of some *En-soi* or the other. So the ideal of every individual is to unite his *Pour-soi* with the *En-soi*. In other words, the ideal of man is to become God that is an impossibility because of being self-contradictory. Thus the destiny of man is nothing but frustration and dissipation. He is doomed to lapse again in the objectivity of the *En-soi*. As Sartre puts it, "human presence is or Man is a useless passion". The irony of the situation is that man is not responsible for the emergence of his being (or non-being), and yet as soon as he emerges dêtrop he has to engage himself in a pursuit that is foredoomed to fail. He has to carry the weight of responsibility born of his unbounded freedom without any sort of excuse to lighten his burden. He has to perforce struggle through life just as a thirsty, weary wayfarer passing through a steep, dusty, hostile territory is obliged to continue his back-breaking journey against all odds. Naturally, such a project that leads man from nothing to nothing is likely to fill him with a sense of dread. He might try to escape from this predicament by resorting to bad faith by surrendering his liberty to the group, the society or the state. But this would be nothing but self-deception, and he is also at liberty to remain enmeshed in the objects of the world and thus choose an unauthentic existence. Man is free to shape his destiny in the direction of authenticity or unauthenticity by affirming or denying his groundedness in Being. For a man of "philosophic faith" even the situations of frustrations

and disasters serve as pointers to the Transcendent. He is able to regard every object and every event of the world as signs of the Transcendent on the strength of his philosophic faith that is powerful enough to enable him to remain steadfastly in his relationship with the Transcendent even amid the "shipwreck" of all his earthly hopes and ideals.

The concept of man and his destiny as put forth by the Existentialists has been obviously developed by philosophers living in an age of crisis. The two world wars and the rise of totalitarian regimes on the continent of Europe created conditions that led to social, moral and spiritual chaos of unprecedented magnitude. People lost their moorings in religion and morality, and experienced a big question mark as regards the very meaning of existence. In such a situation, philosophers like Sartre denied the very existence of God and universally obligatory moral law, and propounded the concept of man as a lack of being whose destiny is to pursue the mirage of being till he is overcome by death as the victory of objectivity over subjectivity. Jaspers who emphasizes the self-transcending nature of man succeeds in building a halfway house between Sartre's Nihilism and religious faith. He has to remain content with the symbolic approach to the Being as the final destiny of man. He sets much store by his "philosophic faith".

When we critically consider the existentialist view of the nature and destiny of man from the viewpoint of Indian Mysticism, its one sidedness at once becomes evident. The nature of man is not exhausted by body, vital force and waking consciousness. These elements constitute only the sheaths (*Kośas*) that surround its real nature as pure Consciousness that is at once *being* and *bliss*. The all-pervading *Saccidānada* constitutes the real nature of man. While Sartre has utterly failed to realize substantive nature of consciousness, he must be given credit for giving a very plausible explanation of the never-ending dissatisfaction and a sense of frustration that seem to fall to the lot of contemporary man. Man, as *Pour-soi* can never unite himself with the *En-soi*. But it is a falsification of the nature of man to consider him as a consciousness which is purely contingent, a non-being, dependent

on the world of *En-soi*. As pointed out in the Advaita Vedanta and Mysticism, pure consciousness is self-illumined and self dependent and it does not require the existence of objects so that it may exist. On the contrary, objects, body, vital force and mind are given meaning by the pure consciousness that constitutes the real nature of man. It is the real destiny of man to transcend the barriers and limitations of body, vital force and mind, and to experience his identity with the infinite, pure consciousness-bliss. This Ātman or Brahman is the goal of all ethico-spiritual endeavour of man. Jaspers' philosophy has made an attempt to approximate to this ideal in his idea of the Transcendent, but faith is a poor substitute for mystical experience of the identity of man with the Ātman.

However, it is worth recalling at this juncture that destiny of man with the realization of the *Saccidānada* is only partially fulfilled. According to the Vedāntic Mysticism, such a man becomes liberated even while he continues to live (*jivanmukta*) and his further mission in life is to work for the upliftment of the rest of humanity by showing them their unity with the *Saccidānada*. As Śri Aurobindo says, there is definitely an individual dimension of the destiny of man, but this should not lead us to ignore the social and the cosmic dimensions that also form the part and parcel of human destiny. "The liberation of the individual soul is, therefore, the keynote of the definite action; it is the primary divine necessity and the pivot on which all else turns. It is the point of Light at which the intended complete self-manifestation in the Man begins to emerge. But the liberated soul extends its perceptions of unity horizontally as well as vertically. Its unity with the Transcendent One is incomplete without its unity with the cosmic Many. And that lateral unity translates itself by a multiplication, a reproduction of its own liberated state at other points in the Multiplicity. The divine soul reproduces itself in similar liberated souls.. ." Indeed, the Saint of Pondicherry sees no limit to the capacity of *Jivanmukta* to extend the bliss of the realization of the divine self-consciousness to other individual souls. Such an extension might cross even the limits of our terrestrial humanity and embrace souls inhabiting other parts of the infinite cosmos. Śri Aurobindo, in this context, draws our

attention to the remarks of the Buddha as he stood on the threshold of *Nirvāna,* he would not make the irrevocable crossing so long as there was a single soul upon earth undelivered from the knot of suffering, from the bondage of the Ego; and says that this vision of the compassionate Buddha refusing to enter the Gates of Heaven till the last soul on the earth attains liberation or *Nirvāna* cannot be treated as a mere legend: it embodies the real spirit in which the *Jivanmukta* sincerely endeavours to serve humanity in order to fulfill his social and cosmic destiny.

Thus, the real destiny of the contemporary individual is to attain the beatific divine self-consciousness for himself as also for the rest of humanity.

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# *Professor Date's New Light on the Vedānta of Śaṃkara*

Philosopher-saint Professor V.H. Date has secured a pride of place among the Indian Philosophers by virtue of the tremendous works on the *Prasthān Trayi*, viz., The *Upanishads* Retold (2 volumes), The *Brahma Yoga* of the *Gītā* and *Vedānta* Explained (2 volumes). Our concern here is with the *Vedānta* Explained, which apart from being a lucid translation of the *Śaṃkara Bhāshya*, presents a novel and iconoclastic exposition of the Philosophy of Śri Śaṃkarāćārya. The great philosopher-mystic Professor R.D. Ranade in his foreword to the first volume of the *Vedānta* Explained rightly calls it "a very important work" the like of which "has been attempted by a very few presons in the history of *Sanskrit* Scholarship". According to Professor Date, the primary thrust of *Śāṃkara Bhāshya* is ethico-spiritual, the metaphysical portion being in the background. Referring to the 100-page exposition of the Philosophy of Śaṃkara (*Vedānta* Explained, Volume II), he entertains the hope that he has thereby fulfilled the desire of Professor Ranade expressed in his foreword to the first volume, "to enable some at least to rise to the ladder of *Vedānta* Philosophy to its real spirit viz., a first-hand contact with Reality, which is beginning, the end and the life of the world – *Tajjalan.*" Thus, Spiritual Humanism is the basis of Śaṃkara's philosophy which considers man, as immersed in *avidyā* as its starting point and man as Spirit incarnate, as its end. Far from being a counsel of pessimism, despair and illusionism, the *Vedānta* of Śaṃkara embodies the message of courage and strength, contemplation, optimism and hope, a life in constant touch with the Real and as such full of activity, contemplation, joy, knowledge, contentment and service to mankind. Śaṃkara's aim and motive being moral and spiritual, a merely *a priori*, speculative, metaphyisical and theoretical approach to Reality would not enable the man to wipe out the stigma of *avidyā* rooted in his *jīva*-hood. So, Prof. Date recommends the practical approach which is at once epistemological, psychological, ethical

and theistic. It is this practical approach that opens up the way to realization of Godhead by following the ethico-spiritual discipline in its different aspects of altruism, meditation, prayer and grace.

Thus, Śaṃkara's philosophy is at once theistic and mystical. As regards to the method followed by the great *Āćārya*, it has been characterized as the dialectic method or the method of construction through criticism by Prof. Date. "It consists in the positing of one's own thesis (*svamatamandana*) on the grounds of refutation of the thesis of the opponent (*paramatakhandana*)," and yet like Socrates he seems most anxious to give sympatheic consideration to the viewpoint of his opponent. But unlike Socrates, he does not profess ignorance and readily meets the opponent in the way he can be best refuted. Inasmuch as he attends to all the sides of human experience, he is simultaneously a realist, an idealist, a theist and a mystic. When he meets a subjective idealist or nihilist, he assumes himself to be a realist; when he meets a theist, he assumes himself to be a mystic. It is thus natural that he should employ several kinds of criteria to distinguish one kind of truth from another, and so to establish in his philosophy different orders of reality. According to Śaṃkara, *Brahman* may be one without a second, it must be present in all the things and the experiences of our life, namely illusion, dream, deep sleep, wekfulness and *Brahmānubhava*, though they differ in degree and kind of reality. He employs the various criteria to evaluate experiences; correspondence, non-contradiction, coherence, continuity and development. He regards the ethico-spiritual life of the saint as having supreme value. Next comes philosophical life. He regards the ethico-spiritual life of the saint as having supreme value. Next comes philosophical life and the lowest in value is mere social and sensible life.

However, the most certain and infallible criterion is *Brahmānubhava* or direct experience itself. *Brahmānubhava* is category in itself; it is *Vastu-tantra* and not *Puruṣha-tantra*; it transcends the empirical distinctions of the knower, the known and knowledge. *Vastu*, *Ātman* or *Brahman* being both the eternal Subject and the eternal Object is self-valid by its own criterion of self-conscious activity or *Chaitanya*. Explaining this, Professor

Date says, *Brahman* is eternal Subject because "all percipient beings are depenedent of their very existence, nature and activity on the *Brahman* as the *antaryāmin* of all", and is eternal Object because "it is the ever lasting *bahiryāmin* or the transcendent object, in the discovery and the gradual assimilation of which all the moral and spiritual progress of the mankind is summed up. The peculiarity of this *Brahmanic* life is that it allows itself to be shared by the individual soul." Śaṃkara's *Vedānta* thus reveals the glory of the man in whom *Brahman* as the subject and *Brahman* as the object meet. He says that by resorting to moral purity, devotion and contemplation, the individual soul epistemologically 'becomes' one with the *Brahman* which he already metaphysically 'is'. It is precisely this unitive *Brahmanic* experience that finds expression in the propositions *Tat tvam asi* and *Aham Brahmāsmi*. This immediate, pura-sensuous, concrete experience transcends the logical law of Contradiction. Just as *Brahman* is at once here and there, smaller than the smallest and larger than the largest etc., even so is the *Brahmvādin,* who is replete with contradictions, every one of which is positive and real as any other. So, higher than the authority of reason is the authority of the *Śrutis*, and when the *Śrutis* clash with each other, Śaṃkara brings in the experience of the *Guru* or the expert. But the final and the highest criterion of the truth and reality is the self-experience or *svānubhava*. As Prof. Date puts it "It is the experience of *Aham Brahmāsmi* that bestows upon the *upadesh* of the *Guru*, viz., *Tat tvam asi,* the stamp of validity and universality. The identification of *tat* and *tvam* which, in theory is applicable to any individual soul, is verified in practice as a concrete, undeniable fact of experience by a particular case." It is this a broad-based, spiritual humanism of *Vedānta* that makes room for the countless *Brahmavādins* who inspite of the difference in degree in the apprehension of the Real, apprehend and live the self-same life of *sat*, *ćit* and *ānanda*. Hence it is *svānubhava* that finally and truly reconciles, imtegrates, and sums up all partial views, attitudes, and interests of life. The method recommended by Śaṃkara for discovering this supreme *anubhava* has been very aptly characterized by Prof. Date as the "method of assertion through negation." In this *Nirvāna Śatak*, Śaṃkara while negatively saying that "I am neither the elements, nor the body,

nor the senses, the mind, the intellect, the *ahamkara*" etc., also makes the positive assertion that "I am *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*." This method is also called the method of *Veveka-Pralaya* by which the wise man counsciously dissovles everything including his own egoism in the one reality of the *Brahman*.

After discussing the aim, the motive and the method of the philosophy of Śaṃkara, Prof. Date makes a frontal attack on some of the time honoured but erroneous notions about philosophy, viz., (i) creation is a myth or illusion which is due to *Māyā* and *Iśvara*, (ii) unqualified non-dualism of Śaṃkara has no room for practical, everyday life of the world, and the theistic interpretation of spiritual life which includes *Karma* and *Upāsana*, and (iii) *Brahman* as Śaṃkara's *nirguna* is the object of knowledge only, and *Brahman* as *saguṇa* is the object of devotion.

Prof. Date, first of all establishes that according to Śaṃkara, creation of the world is a fact and that it is due to *nirguna Brahman*, and as such *Māyā* and *Iśavara* as separate entities are not at all required to account for creation. Śaṃkara defines *Brahman* as being eternal, pure, intelligent, free, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent and one. The very word *Brahman* means that it is the greatest of all, and that therefore it is all-pervading and one. However, in order to eliminate the possibility that *Brahman* might be thought to be 'wholly other' or transcendent only, Śaṃkara adds that *Brahman* might be the inner Self of all. *Brahman* is also regarded as the omniscient and omnipotent cause of the origin, subsistence and dissolution of the unimaginable wonderful world which is made up of names and forms, subjects and objects, causes and effects as obtaining within space and time (*Sūtra* 1.1.2). Prof. Date points out that in the very next sentence, Śaṃkara makes use of the word *Iśvara* to stand for *Brahman*; and he draws our attention to this fact by saying that there cannot be any other cause of the world, such as *Pradhana*, atoms, or any transmigratory being "except the *Iśvara* who is qualified as said above", viz., as being omnipotent, omniscient, etc. Śaṃkara's commentary on the *Sūtra* recalls how Varuna tells his son Brigu that "all these beings have their origin, subsistence and dissolution in the bliss of *Brahman*." Prof. Date avers: "This alone is

sufficient to give lie to the view that the world of names and forms is due to *saguṇa Brahman* or the *Iśvara* as distinguished from *nirguṇa Brahman.*" He goes on to emphasize that from what Śaṃkara says in the remaining *Sūtras* it becomes still more clear that *Brahman* alone, and no variety of its *saguṇa* aspect, is responsible ultimately, both materially and efficient for the existence of the world of becoming. Though *Brahman* exists in itself, is eternal, all-prevading, and immovable (*kujasthānitya* as opposed to *Parināminitya*) and does not undergo a transformation, yet it would be wrong to presume, points out Prof. Date, that *Brahman* cannot be made responsible for the creative act of the world, and act as it 'sees' or 'thinks' "The supremely conscious energy (*chaitnya*) of the *Brahman*, on the other hand, can engage itself in the activity of producing the world out of its own bosom by entertaining notions or ideas (*ikshana*-seeing) about it in terms of names and forms, sustaining them for ever by entering (*anupraveśa*) itself into them as their self." Thus, according to Śaṃkara, *Brahman* is not simply the abstract, theoretical and logical ultimate ground of the universe, so that we may require further a more concrete being like *Iśvara*, *Hiranyagarbha*, *Māyā* etc. to create the universe. It is itself also complete material explanation of them all.

Professor Date gave the most original interpretation of the doctrine of *Māyā* as held by Śaṃkara. Now Śaṃkara regards *Māyā* as the inseparable power of *Brahman*. However, if *Brahman* and *Māyā* are opposed to each other as light and darskness, how can darkness co-exist with light? Prof. Date finds the clue to this problem in the account of the creation of the world as given by Śaṃkara. Śaṃkara holds fast to *parināmvāda* so far as creation of elements in succession is concerned (*Sūtra* 2.3.1-13). He says that unless all created things including *ākāśa* are considered as the products or the *vikāras* of *Brahman*, just as the pots are of clay, it will not be possible to understand how when *Brahman* is known, everything else becomes known. In giving an account of how *Tejas* is produced, he tells us that it is not *vāyu* which produced it, but it is *Brahman* which after having 'seen' and created *ākāśa* and *vāyu*, first assumed their forms and then produced *tejas*. Just as milk is transformed into curd even so *Brahman* assumes the

different forms of the elements and other things after having first thought about them. Then it enters into them as the *Ātman* of them all, and controls them from within, though no one of them knows it in return. Herein, we find the genesis of *Māyā*. The individualized consciousness of the elements, other things and beings created and controlled by *Brahman* as their *antaryāmin*, loses sight of the *Brahmanic* consciousness and assets itself with ego-sense. This is how in the *Kenopaniśad* (3-4), the sun and wind being puffed with their power, could not recognize the *Brahman* whose power they had within them, and were thus powerless to blow off a blade of grass which they were asked to do. This is the "first act of the infinite drama of *Māyā*" which as *avidyā* produces the wrong notions that the product, the *vikāra* or *upādhi* is something different from the *upādhi*-less producer, the *Brahman*. It exists only in name and form and is bound up with the egoistic consciousness of the *upādhis*.

Why does this *avidyā*, this forgetfulness arise in the finite beings like *ākāśa* and others, when as a matter of fact *Brahman*, which is immanent in them is pure consciousness, and is the light of eternal knowledge? The answer lies in the nature of *Māyā* as collection of different powers of *Brahman*, especially the two peculiar but different powers – *kriyāśakti* and the *jñānaśakti* (*Katha. 1.3.11;Su.A4.3*). Prof. Date remarks that when creative power of *Brahman* is taken into consideration along with the power of knowledge, we shall be able to explain not only the process of creation but also the emergence of *avidyā* out of *Māyā*, even at the start of the creative process. Indeed, the very first *sankalpa* of *Brahman* 'I am one, let me be many', is responsible for germinating the *avidyā*. The *sankalpa* being *satya-sankalpa*, the plurality of elements, the *indriyas*, the bodies, the mind, the intellect, the *ahaṃkāra* and *prāṇa* comes to be by its own right. These constitute the *upādhis* of *nāma* and *rūpa* which affect the *jiva* but not the *Brahman* and from each other. "Just as a cloud produced by the sun, hides Him from men's view without affecting the sun in any way, even so, the *upādhis* produced by the will of *Brahman*, limit and hide the *Brahman* from the view of *jivas* without affecting the *Brahman* in the least." It is this *avidyā* which naturaly leads to *adhyāsa* or the mutual superimposition of

the real and the unreal, as has been eloquently explained by *Śaṃkara* at the beginning of his *Brahma Sūtras*.

Professor Date further points out that while *Māyā* as *avidyā* blinds the *jiva*, *Māyā* as *vidyā* is nothing but *Māyā* as its aspect of *sattva-guna*. It helps *jiva* in its journey to *Ātmānubhava*. "It helps him in his efforts to open the golden, tempting lid which has covered the treasure of *Brahmajñāna* and to scatter away the illusion of the darkness and misery." It eanbles him to go from death to immortal life, from miseries of the ego to the life of *ānanda* and *ćaitanya* of *Brahman*. In its *sattvika* aspect, *Māyā* becomes the necessary link between bondage and liberty.

In this context, Prof. Date makes another electrifying interpretation of the *Vedānta* of Śaṃkara by proving that *Pariṇāma* and *Vivarta* are compatible with each other. *Pariṇāma* and *Vivarta* do not connote reality and unreality of the world respectively. The notion that *Pariṇāma* and *Vivarta* are compatible with each other has been accepted by scholars since Rāmānuja. It is Rāmānuja again who popularized the notion that *Pariṇāma* and *Vivarta* are pointers to reality and unreality of the world respectively. So far as Śaṃkara is concerned, he does not regard *Pariṇāma* or *Vivarta* to be the sole criterion of reality. He has given both kinds of illustrations in order to explain the relation between the world and the *Brahman*. The world is like a snake on the rope, mirage in the desert, silver on the shell, a castle in the clouds (*Vivarta*); it is also like vessel made of clay, an ornament of gold, curds of milk, a ripple on water, a piece of cloth out of threads (*Pariṇāma*). Moreover, neither of the two words exclusively provide the key to the questions of the reality or unreality of the world. According to Śaṃkara, the world is real because it is nothing else but the *Brahman*; it is unreal because it is taken to be something else other than *Brahman* – "With *Brahman* world is real, without it world is unreal." Both *Pariṇāmavāda* and *Vivartavāda* essentially direct our attention to the Cause i.e. *Brahman*. What Śaṃkara is anxious to drive at is that the effect is non-different from the cause, and that in viewing the effects i.e. world and the *jivas*, one must be conscious of the

fundamental thesis that in diong so he is only viewing the cause (*Brahman*). Inasmuch as *Vivartavāda* helps us to better resorting to the Cause by continuously eliminating the names and forms of the effects, Śaṃkara regards it as safer to depend on *Vivart-avāda*. Similarly, though *Ajātavāda*, *Cidvilāsvāda* and *Māyāvāda* equally point to the reality of the *Brahman*, yet *Māyāvāda* helps the human being unerringly in the process of the realization of the *Brahman* by enabling him to discard the unreal *upādhis*.

In conclusion, we point out a couple of additional points of interpretation of Philosophy of Śaṃkara which Prof. Date wishes to drive home to us for the correct understanding of the spirit of the great *Ācārya*'s view point. One of the points concerns the place of *Karma* and *Upāsanā* in Śaṃkara's system. Contrary to the universal belief that *Jñāna* to Śaṃkara is all in all, Prof. Date makes it clear that in the process of the realization of the *Brahmajñāna*, the efficacy of the Karma and Upāsanā hass been recognized by Śaṃkara, though *Jñāna* as an accomplished fact is certainly independent of Karma or Upāsanā. He says " *Ātman* as an accomplished fact, transcends Karma and *Upāsanā*; the *Ātman* as a realizable fact of human experience is impossible to be achieved without them. Nay, even when a person is lodged in *Brahman*, some kind of *Karma*, e.g. disinterested or altruistic one, may continue without binding the person to its fruits. Especially, the *Upāsanā* must continue to the end of life (Su. 4.1.12)." The second point mentioned by Prof. Date concerns with his assertion that though *Vedānta* of Śaṃkara is mystical *par* excellence, its mysticism is based on theism. Mysticism does not connote the denial of theistic devotion, but the fulfillment of it. According to Śaṃkara, theism passes into mysticism, *Upāsanā* ends in *jñāna*. The mystic continues to be a theist, *Advaitin* continues to be a *Bhakta*. "Notwithstanding the removal of difference between *thee* and *me* as between the sea and the wave, I belong to *thee*, oh Lord, though you may not be said to belong to me, for surely, the wave belongs to the sea, even though the sea may not belong to the wave," says Śaṃkara.

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## *Mysticism and Neo-Hegelianism*

Neo- Hegelianism comprises the Idealistic thinkers of the recent past, prominent among them being F.H. Bradley, Bernard Bosanquet, A.S. Pringle-Pattison, and Josiah Royce. During the later half of the nineteenth century, those religious-minded British thinkers who struggled to save religion and faith against the rising tide of Naturalism and Agnosticism popularized by victorious science found the native philosophies of Intuitionism and Empiricism to be hopelessly inadequate to meet the situation. They eagerly turned to Hegelianism as the alternative philosophy that promised to find a place for the threatened spiritual values even in a law-governed universe and thus opened, a perspective for the reconciliation of religion and science. The doors were opened to the understanding of German Idealism in general and Hegel in particular by the publication of J.H. Stirling's epoch-making 'Secret of Hegel'in 1865. Then Hegel broke in "like a Fate upon the hallowed traditions of British Philosophy" and by the earnest efforts of the pioneers like Green, Edward Caird, Wallace etc., the wave of Idealism swept everywhere like a triumph. Hegel liberated the speculative impulse of the British genius, while Kant gave an unprecedented impetus to the critical impulse. Thus arose a brilliant team of strong speculative minds who not only imbibed the spirit of German idealism but also through creative criticism made original attempts at new solutions of the old cosmic problems. Bradley, Bosanquet and Pringle-Pattison became the most notable contributors to the Western Idealistic thought that gained surprising freshness and richness thereby.

At the time when Bradley and Bosanquet were taking the British philosophical world by storm, there was another silent figure on the other side of the Atlantic who endeavoured to reach the central truths of Absolute Idealism by himself, laboriously but unmistakably. And indeed Josiah Royce was equal to his task for he combined within himself a profound and tenacious scholarship with originality rare for the times. Royce came to philosophy by way of religion, and he wanted to build a system that while

recognising the new discoveries in science, transcends its limitations and presents an interpretation of reality, deeper and more inclusive, with an adequate place for spiritual values including truth, beauty, goodness and religion.

Thus Royce ranks with Bradley and Bosanquet as one of the foremost Neo-Hegelian philosophers of the recent past. However, we will confine ourselves to an exposition of the main principles of the philosophy of Bradley, who is doubtless the greatest of the Neo-Hegelian philosophers and assess the same critically from the stand-point of mysticism. The system of Absolute Idealism being intellectual, constructions of the ultimate Reality succeeds in giving us only an abstract and speculative picture which falls short of that living concrete Reality. Anticipating the conclusion, we can say that Absolute Idealism represents the nearest approximation to Reality. It can be seen to be making an irresistible transition towards mysticism that involves a direct first hand contact with reality.

Coming to Bradley, we find that he propounds a metaphysical theory based on Hegel's principle and yet deviating from Hegel in important respects. The moving force behind his great work "Appearance and Reality" is the strong conviction ~~of Bradley~~ that "outside of spirit there is not, and there cannot be, any reality, and, the more than anything is spiritual, so much the more it is veritably real"[1] ~~and~~ This indeed is the kernel of Bradleyanism as of all true Idealism. The ultimate Reality according to Bradley is an all-inclusive, self-sustained, sentient, Absolute experience that contains all phenomenal diversity in a harmonious system. The finite human mind can scarcely soar up to the giddy heights of the highest experience, but systematic inquiry would certainly succeed in giving us an idea of it, that is true and reliable in its main outline.

Bradley arrives at his conception of the absolute Experience by undertaking a critique of the categories of thought. Proceeding on the basis of the law of contradiction, which is taken to be as supremely valid for ~~of~~ Ontology as it is for Logic, Bradley seeks for harmony, consistency and a system as against discordance,

discrepancy and chaos. In his quest for the supreme harmony, he takes up every important cross section of the universe and brings the time-honoured conceptions of viewing it under a searching eye. The antinomian character of Space and Time, Substance, Quantity and Causality, even Thought and Self is exposed, and every phenomenon is seen to be full of internal discrepancies, vitiated by relations and determined externally by an "other".

After repeated failure in search for harmony, Bradley finds that "human thought itself being dualistic can never succeed in giving us a harmonious reality." Thought implies a sundering of the 'what' from the 'that' of reality, and it can never transcend ibis of dualism of 'content' and 'existence', 'quality' and 'being', 'predicate' and 'subject'. Being merely ideal, discussive and relational, it falls far short of that mode of apprehending the reality that is characterised by the fact of sensible experience and inveterate presentation with its colouring of pleasure and pain"[2]. So an experience richer than mere thought, a mode of apprehension that transcends all dualism and relational diversity, in its. "immediacy" can alone be "adequate" to the task of representing reality. Immediate presentation of feeling, which is a whole of differences not yet parted by relations, suggests an all-embracing experience of a higher kind at a level above that of relational thought "where will and thought and feeling may all once more be one". Our ideas of goodness and of the beautiful involving as they do "the experience of a whole beyond relations though full of diversity" also endorse some such view of ultimate experience. The supra-conceptual and supra- relational whole of experience cannot be of the nature of thought, will or feeling as such, but "it would be an experience entire", transcending yet "containing all elements in harmony" where "thought would be present as a higher intution; will would be there where the ideal had become reality; and ~~reality~~ beauty and pleasure and feeling would live on in this total fulfillment."[3]

Bradley goes on to point out that whatever falls short of that "transient Absolute Reality is "appearance"; when viewed in isolation and abstraction from the whole, it is then full of discord

and riddled with contradiction". Conversely, the absolutely Real being the one self sustained individual, it follows that whatever in our realm of appearance appropriates most nearly to individuality, is more true and real than what clearly falls short of individuality. The human mind would be more real on that score than a mere aggregate of stones. Bradley thus propounds his celebrated doctrine of degree of truth and reality that stands for a hierarchy of various appearances. The more inclusive and harmonious an appearance is, the nearer is it to the Absolute Reality. But in perfect experience or the Absolute, no finite or partial reality survives unchanged. We have "an all-pervasive transfusion with a re-blending of all material. By a divine alchemy all discordance is transmuted into harmony; evil, error and ugliness are transformed into good, truth and healthy when supplemented by the great harmony of the absolute. And the absolute contains with all certainty a "balance of pleasure," for it being self-consistent is theoretically satisfactory and to suppose theoretical satisfaction "existing one-sidedly and together with practical discomfort appears inadmissible."[4]

Thus stands the Bradleyan absolute, formally consistent, materially sentient, and perfect in every respect. It manifests itself throughout the realm of appearance, though not always in equal degree of perfection. "These are degrees and ranks, but, one and all, they are alike, indispensable, "because" reality without appearance would be nothing, for there certainly is nothing outside appearances. But we must not forget that reality is the unity in which all things coming together, are transmuted, in which they are changed all alike, though not equally."[5]

While defining the nature of the absolute, Bradley is throughout anxious to steer clear of the two extremes of "empty transcendence" and "shallow immanence" of the Absolute. At the close of his inquiry summing up his conception, he says, "The positive relation of every appearance as an adjective to reality among its appearances in different degrees and with diverse values this double truth we have found to be the centre of philosophy."[6]

Bradley's philosophy is thus clearly spiritualistic with a strong monistic bias. In this monistic setting the appearance of "the finite centres of experience" and their endless plurality, are puzzles that seem all the more bewildering. And indeed Bradley confesses frankly that "we do not know why the absolute divides itself into centers, or way in which, so divided, it still remains one"[7]. Bradley confers an adjectival status to the finite self, and regards it as an appearance only. The reason is that its content is "irreconcilable", with the immediacy of its existence. For the finite content is necessarily determined from the outside; its external relations penetrate its essence, and so, carry it beyond its own being. And, since the "what" of all feeling is discordant with its "that", its is appearance and as much it cannot be real. The finite centres of experience being "appearances" qualify the absolute reality and its adjectives, "Every centre qualifies the whole", and the whole as substantive, is present in each of its adjectives. "So the finite individual has only an adjectival mode of existence. From the empirical standpoint, it is real in the highest sense; but from the point of view of the Absolute "we can hardly say that the absolute consists of finite things when the things as such are there transmuted and have lost their individual nature."[8] When we mount to the noumenal viewpoint the impersonal absorption of the finite soul in the glorious life of the absolute is "the final destiny and lost truth of the things." The finite self then appears to be a mere appearance, an abstraction born out of limited vision, the "fall from grace" in theological terms.

The ethical and religious counterpart of the metaphysical doctrine propounded by Bradley attempts to break down "the common prejudice in favour of the ultimate truth of morality and religion." Bradley argues that nothing short of the Absolute or the Whole is ultimately real. Morality and religion are mere aspects within the Whole. Hence both are not real but only appearances whose very nature is to pass beyond absolute stands beyond mere morality and religion as the highest perfection that is at once super-moral and super-religious. Dealing with morality, Bradley says that the highest moral category of goodness is inherently self-discrepant for like truth, it contains "the separation of idea from

existence". The consummation desired by the 'good' lies in the identity of idea and existence, but its accomplishment, indeed, would destroy the proper essence of goodness. "The Good is not the perfect itself, and if it were completed, it would forthwith cease properly to be good." Again, goodness when taken in the sense of self-realization is seen to bifurcate into two divergent and mutually opposite modes of self-assertion and self-sacrifice that morality can never hope to harmonize. Apart from the contradictions implied in its highest category morality, the persistent demands of moral life that the ideal self must be actualized and evil must be overruled by good, and the defects and contradictions in every self must be removed, cannot be fulfilled. "Morality in brief calls for an unattainable unity of its aspects, and, in its search for this, it naturally is led beyond itself into a higher form of goodness. It ends in what we may call religion."[9]

In his "Ethical studies" Bradley again remarks "Morality issues in religion". Everything imperfect and evil, discordant and self-transcending, is taken up and harmonised in religion because "for religion all is the perfect expression of a supreme will, and all things, therefore, are good." But religion itself being practical exists "by a kind of perpetual oscillation and compromise." The maxim of faith is "Be sure that opposition to the good is overcome, and nevertheless act as if it were there." Such a maxim is necessary in the field of religion, but it is obviously not self-consistent. Similarly, religion implies a relation between man and God. "It parts itself into opposite terms with a relation between them; but in the same breath it denies this provisional sundering, and it asserts and feels in either term the inward presence of the other". Thus "self-contradiction in theory and oscillation in sentiment" being inseparable, from the essence of religion, "it is a mere appearance" and "hence it is liable on every side to shift beyond its own limits."[10] "The God of religion is a *finite factor in the whole* and therefore an appearance of the Absolute. The consummation sought by religious consciousness is the perfect unity of Man and God. The unity implies a complete suppression of relation between Man and God; but with that suppression, religion and the good have altogether as such

disappeared."[11] Therefore, in the ultimate sense, the reality must be supra religious and supra-moral.

But Bradley, in order to avoid any misunderstanding, adds that though religion is an appearance, it is not on that account worthless. "There are appearances and appearances and there is difference in degrees throughout". Religion ranks highest in the linearity of appearances. "There is nothing more real than what comes in religion ...The man, who demands a reality more solid than that of religious consciousness, seeks he does not know what."

Thus, Western Idealism in general, and Neo-Hegelianism, in particular, reaches a high water-mark in Bradley's system. Bradley preached against the extreme intellectualism of Hegel and the Hegelians not in the mediocre fashion by substituting either will or feeling for thought in the life of the Absolute, but by demonstrating the limits of human thought in a manner reminiscent of Kant. The main burden of his teaching that the ultimate reality being supralogical and mystical in character cannot be approached by thought. True, as Hegel said, the real must be rational, but it must be a great deal more. The dualism involved in all thought, and the recognition of will and feeling as essential feature; or the real world, made it impossible to assign any privileged position to the merely rational in the scheme of reality. As a matter of fact, the Absolute Experience in its immediacy and fullness far transcends more thought, feeling and will as such.

Again Bradley displays a marvelous philosophical insight when he conceives the ontological real to be also axiologically the brightest ideal. The absolute or the whole is not only the criticism of reality but also of value. Our ideals are nothing but the presence in us of the Whole, which being our very deeper self, perpetually and unmistakably clamours for realization so that despite setbacks and back-slidings, trials and tribulations, we are ceaselessly advancing on the high road of ideal spiritual life. Our highest activities in the fields of science, art and religion are in fact so many avenues, through which we try to appropriate the Whole,

and they have their sole explanation and justification in what Bosanquet calls "the mind's misuse towards Totality". Our values thus have their source in the absolute that is bursting forth on every side and in every direction suffusing the temporal with the glory of the eternal. We find that the supreme value consists in our self-identification with the absolute, and anyone who asks for a higher value than *that* which emerge and thereby asks for he knows not what. On this view, reality and value are seen to be inseparably connected in such a way that the more one approximates to the real, the higher one ascends in the scale or values.

There is no doubt that Bradley's system represents the culminating point of the Western Absolutistic tradition that started its career with the Being of Parmenides. The Bradleyan Absolute seems to be the nearest systematic approach ever gained by any western mind to a mystical view of Reality. Bradley could free himself from the spell of intellectualism and panlogism, which went unchallenged since Hegel taught that thought and reality were identical. However, his substitution of "'sentient experience" for thought is not very happy one. For sentience or the psychical has got associations of finitude and so cannot aptly be utilised for conceiving the ultimate experience. If a finite centre of feeling undergoes total transmutation in the absolute, then the same fate must obviously overtake sentience or feeling of which the former consists. Bradley appeals to a higher type of sentience while characterizing the Absolute, but it would have been better still if the Absolute was called an intuitive experience. However, we find that in spite of his penetrating criticism of thought and relations, Bradley seems to have stopped only half way. His whole position on relations is compromised when he applies organic conception to the Absolute. If the Absolute is beyond thought and relations, then it cannot properly be described onan organic-whole or a harmonious system. If the supra-relational character of the Absolute is to be preserved, then we have to conceive it to be an indivisible integral experience which can hardly be described as a 'System' or 'Organic unity'. Again, there is an evidence of Hegelian bias when Bradley in the second half of his "Appearance and Reality" anxiously-reclaims all the appearances rejected as,

being illusory and erroneous in the first half. It is declared that "'The reality itself is nothing apart from appearances and that the absolute has no assets beyond appearances." On the one hand, it is stated by Bradley that the appearances are "transmuted and changed beyond recognition in the Absolute, and on the other hand it is declared that the Absolute is bankrupt apart from the appearances." Such paradoxes lend support to Ward's caustic remark that their author "is himself afflicted or gifted with a double personality" and "strikes us as a man of two moods, and speaking therefore in two voices." From the mystical view-point once the self-identification with the Absolute is attained, no dualism of appearance and reality persists?? independence the question of reconciling them no longer arises. It is Bradley's failure to realize these mystical implications of his own line of thought that accounts for his disastrous attempts to relate appearance and reality to each other. It is thus that he is involved in the contradiction that while he starts from the thesis that nothing that is determined by a relation is real, he ends by concluding that "Reality itself is determined by its relation to Appearance". When he goes so far as to recognize it appeared, the absolute would be nothing. He reverts to Hegel's position formulated in the famous saying that "God without the world is not God". From this point of view, we feel the justice of the Italian Philosopher's criticism that "Bradley's Absolute is an absolute which explains nothing, but needs itself to be explained by the appearance, the phenomenon; it is indetermination itself, it is in fact an absolute of straw".[12] Just as the multiplication of any amount of ciphers cannot give us unity, so also any system of appearance cannot give us Reality.

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# *Philosophy, Science and Values*

The topic has undoubtedly a relevance to the current crisis-ridden state of human society, but it has also a perennial significance. Unprecedented advancements in the field of science and technology have led to an increasing inter-dependence among the nations of our world by building bridges of rapid means of transport and communication. Though science has thus created conditions for the harmonious organization of different peoples in a single world community, yet the die-hard, narrow nationalism of the super-powers continues to fan the flames of mutual distrust and rivalry which might blow off this small planet of ours in a nuclear holocaust. Scientific knowledge has given the rulers of nations tremendous power, which is in danger of being used for the ultimate extermination of the human race. Yet the same power can be utilized for transforming this hell of our hungry and diseased, toiling millions into a heaven of contented and healthy human beings engaged in creative pursuit of peace and freedom. This can happen only if science seeks direction from philosophy, and philosophy in turn is wedded to a proper sense of values. Thus the solution to the present crisis facing humanity definitely lies in seeing Science, Philosophy and values in a proper perspective. But apart from their bearing on the present-day crisis, Science, Philosophy and values have a lasting significance for human life. Hence the questions of their respective nature, their mutual relationship and relative importance need discussion.

However, we propose to limit the present exposition to the theme of values, which, in our view, lie at the heart of all nobler human achievements in the fields of science, art, religion and Philosophy. It is a truism to says that the differentia of human species is rationality. Man belongs to a class of animals endowed with reason. But within the class of men there is a segment of thinking humanity whose differentia is their value-sensitivity. Thinking persons are sensitive to values. They have a capacity to sense values, which supervene the world of facts. They can discriminate the valuable from the valueless, and the more valuable from the less valuable. This value-orientation is the key

to the development of their personality in its cognitive-affective and creative-conative dimensions, because appreciation of values presupposes discriminative intellect of a high order, refinement of emotions and a will to choose the valuable. It is these value-orientated persons who have been the moving forces behind the creation of civilizations and cultures throughout the ages. Every age has cherished some fundamental value or other. The Greeks put the highest store by the value of Measure, of Order, of Harmony. Christians stood for the value of charity and love. Medieval people are known to have devoted themselves to the value of Chivalry. Modern 18th Century prized Benevolence above all. Arid in the recent times Equality and Liberty have emerged as supreme values. As with Ages so also with Philosophers some value or the other assumed the highest significance. Plato regarded Justice as the supreme value. Aristotle could realise the contemplation of Divine Theoria as the highest value. Similarly Spinoza, the God-intoxicated philosopher, set the highest value on the Intellectual Love of God, while Kant conceived of the "Kingdom of Ends" as the noblest value. T.H. Green regarded Self-realization as the goal of all moral endeavours.

From this point of view, it is the value consciousness of man that can be seen to have given rise to Science and Philosophy. His search for the value of Truth in the various cross-sections of this universe has resulted in the growth of special sciences, which unify knowledge pertaining to their respective limited fields of study. But man's quest for Truth does not stop with the piecemeal discoveries of special sciences. So he advances towards Philosophy, which gives a synoptic view of the universe as a whole in which the partial truth of special sciences is seen as unified in one complete Truth. That all philosophy is value-orientated is not at all difficult to discover. Indian Philosophical systems, whether orthodox or heterodox, are wedded to the Supreme value of Moksha or Liberation, which serves as the guiding star of all their speculations. Even the Charvakas are guided by the value of Kama or Happiness in propounding a thorough going materialism. The great Advaita Philosopher Śaṃkaracārya has insisted on the four-fold discipline *(sadhana*

*chatushtayam)* as the essential qualification of a person who intends to embark on the philosophical enquiry into the nature of Ultimate Reality. An analysis of the scheme of four-fold discipline makes it clear that the great Acharya attaches supreme importance to the cultivation of a value-orientation on the part of any person who desires to undertake a philosophical quest into the nature of the *Brahman*. First, one who desires to know the *Brahman* should be able to discriminate between the things of eternal value and those of ephemeral value *(nityanityavastu viveka)*. Secondly, he should cultivate positive moral values of Self-Control, Detachment etc. *(shama-dama)*. Thirdly, he should be ready to sacrifice the worldly as well as the other-worldly enjoyments for the sake of devoting himself to philosophical pursuits, and thus acquire the negative value of Non-attachment *(vairāgya)*. Last but not the least, he should set his heart on the attainment of the supreme value of *Moksha* or Liberation *(mumukshutva)* in this very life. Thus we see how Saṃkarāćārya visualizes a completely value-charged scheme of discipline as the essential qualification of a student of philosophy *(adhikāri)*.

When we come to the contemporary philosophers, we find the great philosopher-mystic Prof. R. D. Ranade defining philosophy as a justification of spiritual life. Spiritual life is the pursuit of the highest value viz. God-realization by means of lifelong, one-pointed and unswerving devotion to God *(bhakti)*. Ranade says that in the process of realization the devotee first touches God *(brahmasamsparsa)*, then he is identified with God and experiences the highest bliss, and at the point of culmination the state of the enjoyment of ecstatic bliss is identified with God. He thus propounds the identification of Bliss or *Ānanda* with God or *Brahman*, and thereby makes Beatification itself as the "pivot and fulcrum of Reality". For Ranade "the axiological conception of bliss and the metaphysical conception of *Brahman* are the same" Philosophy has ceased to be speculative. It has become identical with the experience of value. Ranade's thought exemplifies the fulfillment of Philosophy in the realisation of its identity with the value of all values—call it God or *Brahman* or Bliss or Reality.

Our view that value is the be-all and end-all of every philosophy may be illustrated with reference to Western Philosophy also. Socrates conceives philosophy as an inquiry into the nature of moral values and ultimately arrives at his unique doctrine, that virtue is knowledge. Socratic concept of the value-based Philosophy finds its further explication in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. Plato's doctrine of the idea of Good as "the sum of Reality" and Aristotle's doctrine of God as the eternal Self-spectator represent the high watermark of Idealism that identifies value with Reality. The Greek Philosophy comprising such diverse schools as Pythagoreanism, Epicureanism, Stoicism and Neo-Platonism conceives Philosophy as a way of life devoted to values and defines it as a search for the hierarchy or scale of values. Concern for spiritual and moral values had dominated the philosophical speculations of St. Augustine, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, Green, Bradley and Bosanquet. In contemporary Western Philosophy, Pragmatism and Existentialism are outstanding value-charged philosophies. Existentialist philosophers, whether theistic or atheistic, claim to impart a sense of values to the contemporary crisis-ridden bewildered man by illuminating the possibilities of his existence so that he may make authentic choice in complete freedom with a sense of responsibility. If the Linguistic Analysts have deviated from the concept of Philosophy as a search for values, they have by the Nemesis of their own logic only succeeded in presenting a *reductio ad absurdum* of Philosophy. They have come to the unenviable conclusion that most of so called philosophy is meaningless jargon, and that value-statements are devoid of cognitive worth in the strict sense of the term. This only illustrates that a philosophy that is sundered from its moorings in value becomes self-destructive.

Thus, the urgent task before present day philosophers is to discover, a scale of values in which the abiding, the universal and the absolute values, as also the ephemeral, the particular and the relative values are arranged in their proper places. There can be no two opinions that values which make for the enrichment and development of personality and encourage cooperation and brotherhood in the world community are to be created and shared by all. Organic values of health and happiness, intellectual values

of truth and intelligence, moral values of courage, kindness, honesty, tolerance, love, gratitude and freedom, aesthetic values of beauty and harmony, and spiritual values of meditation, contemplation and devotion to God and service to humanity are abiding and universal because they are rooted in man's nature and in the structure of the world in which he lives.

The overwhelming importance of Philosophy and values should not blind us to the significance of Science. Science gives man control of nature and enables him to predict the future events for his own benefit. Bacon's dictum that knowledge is power is pre-eminently applicable to scientific knowledge. Apart from providing a theoretical understanding of the laws operating in the natural and social world, science has given us technological appliances which save our time, labour and energy. Electronic devices and computers are working wonders in the exploration of outer space, earth's resources, mysteries of the oceans, and the inside of the human body. Thus, science has given us power to attain goals, which may be creative as well as destructive. It is like a double-edged sword, that cuts both ways. It looks to Philosophy for a system of values, which might be achieved by the powerful means invented by it. The same energy released by nuclear fission may be used for blowing off this planet to pieces or may be harnessed for peaceful purposes in the fields of irrigation, agriculture, power-generation and medicine. Science without philosophy is blind, and Philosophy without value is empty speculation. Science, Philosophy and Values together epitomize everything that is of worth in the life of man.

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# *Index*

*abhaya*
Fearlessness, 100,104
*abheda*
non-difference, 7, 118
*Abheda*
identity, 114
*Abraham, 4, 9, 28, 30*
*Absolute, 4, 41, 49, 51, 53, 60, 61, 62, 35, 88, 96, 128, 137, 140, 142, 147, 165-71*
*Absolute Experience, 4, 170*
*Absolute Idealism*
F.H. Bradley, 41, 51, 53, 163, 164
*Ācāryas, 6, 7, 146*
*aćit*
Matter, 7, 117, 118, 125
*Advaita Vedanta, 9, 42, 113, 152*
*advaya*
non-dual, 75
*Aeon, 132*
*Agnosticism, 46,144, 163*
*Aham Brahmāsmi, 122,156*
*Ahamkāra, 124*
*Ahimsā*
Harmlessness, 100
*aiśvarya*
marvelous powers, 7
*akirtikarama, 83*
*Alvārs, 114*
*Anāhat Śabda, 144*
*ānandasvarupa, 120*
*ananyacetastvam, 105*
*anāryajustama, 83*
*anasakti*
non-attachment, 100
*antaryāmin*
inner self, 156
*aparā*
lower, 97,136
*Aprākrta, 125*
*aprthaksiddhi, 117, 128*
*āpta-kāma, 55*
*Aristotelian*
Eternal Self-spectator, 60
*Aristotle, 61, 68, 117, 140, 145, 174, 176*
*Arjuna, 83*
*Āruni Uddālaka, 143*
*Āryas, 83*
*asvargyam, 83*
*Asymptotic Approximation, 67, 144*
*ātma-Vikshepah, 124*
*Augustine, 13, 60, 84, 131, 176*
*Aurobindo*
Śri, 13, 93, 152, 153
*avidyā*
ignorance, 121, 122, 123, 136
*avidyā-karma, 121, 122*
*Avyakta Upāsanā, 102*
*Bacon*
Francis, 177
*Bādarāyana*
Sage, 19, 143
*bahiryāmin*
transcendent object, 156
*Beatificism, 59, 100, 102*
*Being, 1, 2, 3, 6, 14, 21, 25, 31, 33, 35, 43, 53, 55, 59, 61, 86, 89, 97, 104, 121, 127, 132, 134, 140, 149, 150, 151, 165, 170*
*Bentham*
Jeremy, 81, 85
*Bergson*
Henri, 73
*Bhagavadgitā, 19, 20, 59, 85, 86, 93, 95, 100, 107, 138*
*Bhāgavata*
Purāna, 114
*Bhakti, 85,105, 110, 113, 123, 124, 137*
*Bhavadgitā, 7, 65*
*Bheda*
difference, 114
*Bhedābheda*
identity-and-difference, 114, 129
*Bhedābhedavāda*
of Nimbārka, 120
*bhoktā*
real enjoyer, 120
*Biblical*
doctrines, 28
*Bosanquet*
Bernard, 147, 163, 164, 170, 176
*Brabma-sakšātkāra, 129*

*Bradley*
F.H., 3, 51, 63, 126, 147, 163- 172, 176
*Brahmaćarya*
stage of life, 77
*Brahma-jñani, 19*
*Brahman, 6, 7, 9, 18, 19, 24, 43, 59, 62, 67, 75, 78, 84, 87, 99, 102, 107-111, 114 - 120, 122- 130, 135, 136, 138, 146, 152, 175*
*Brahmānubhava, 177, 109, 112, 123*
realization of *Brahman*, 155, 156
*Brahma-Sākṣātkāra, 123*
*Brahma-Sutra*
Bādarāyana, 19
*Brahma-Sūtras, 146*
*Brahma-Yogi, 88*
*Brahmayogin*
realiser of Brahman, 137, 138
*Brahmjñani, 75*
*Brahm-Yoga, 88*
*Brandt*
Richard, 80, 85
*Brentano, 42, 44*
*Camus*
Albert, 21, 24
*Carlyle*
Thomas, 62
*Cartesian, 23, 37*
*Categorical Imperative, 93, 99,100*
*Chaitanya*
self consious activity, 156
*Change, 55*
*Christ*
Jesus, 14, 25, 28, 29, 30, 77, 131, 132, 133, 137
*Christian, 28, 83, 84, 93, 131, 132*
*Christianity, 16, 28, 58, 131, 133*
*Church of Denmark, 28*
*cidācidviśista, 116*
*ćit*
Soul, 7, 117, 119, 125
*Cogito*
thinking of Self, 37, 38, 39, 40
*Dark Night of the soul, 18*
*das Mir-Eigene, 39, See Husserl*
*Dasien, 23*
*Date*
V,H., iv, *154, 155- 162*
V.H., 2, 110-114, 143-145
*Deha*
body, 136
*Dehin, 136*
*Demiurge*
Jewish God, son of Sophia, 132
*Deontological, 82*
*Deontologism, 82*
*Descartes*
Rene, 23, 32, 38
*Dewey*
John, 47, 51-55, 57
*Dharmas, 84*
*Divine,4, 8, 10-12, 14-18,28, 61-63, 83, 86-91, 94, 95, 107, 116, 125, 132, 141, 153, 166, 174*
*Divine Kingdom of Ends. See Ranade*
*Divinity, 11, 28, 106*
*Dvaitādvaita*
Nimbārkācārya, 113
*Dvaitavāda*
Madhvācārya, 6, 7
*en-soi, 24- 27,150-152*
*Ephemeralism, 61, 97, 98*
*Epicureanism, 176*
*Epoche. See Husserl*
*Eternity and Time, 55*
*Ethics, 29, 84, 93, 140*
*European Philosophy, 58*
*Everlasting Nay, 18*
*Everlasting Yea, 18*
*Existentialism, 2, 3, 4, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 149, 176*
*Existentialists, 23, 148, 151*
*Frankena*
William, 82, 85
*Garuda, 122*
*Gifford Lectures, 50*
*Gitā. See Bhagavadgitā, See Bhagavadgitā*
*Gnosis*
supra-rational knowledge, 133, 139
*Gnosticism, 7, 132, 133, 134, 136, 138, 145*
*God, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11- 33, 35, 48-51, 55, 57- 68, 70 -74, 76, 78, 80 -90, 92, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 100-115, 118 -128, 132, 133, 134, 136, 137, 138, 141-147, 150-152, 169, 172, 175-178*
*goptrtva varanam, 125*

*Gunas, 102*
*gunaviśista, 117*
*Guru*
Spiritual Teacher, 17, 59, 109
*Heidegger*
Martin, 21, 24, 150
*Heraclitus, 5, 72, 78*
*Herakleitos. See Heraclitus*
*Hindu, 84, 85*
*Hiriyanna*
Mysore, 127, 129, 131
*Husserl*
Edmund, 4, 5, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44
*Immanence, 97, 116*
*Incarnation, 28- 30, 97, 119*
*Instrumentalism or Experimentalism*
Dewey's Pragmatism, 51
*Intellect, Feeling and Will*
Mystical experience, 11, 13
*Intellectual Cosmos, 134*
*Intellectual-Principle,87, 88, 90, 91, 134, 135*
*Intuition, 3, 5, 11, 64, 72, 74,126, 135*
*Ishwarabhāva*
Lordliness, 101
*Iśvara, 7*
*jada, 7*
*jāgrati, 103*
*James*
William, 45-51, 54, 56, 147
*Jaspers*
Karl, 4, 21, 27, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 151, 152
*Jew, 83*
*jīva, 7*
*Jivan-Mukta, 19*
*Jivanmukti, 98, 99*
*Jivās*
empirical selves, 136
*jñāna*
knowledge, 161
*jñānakarmasamuccaya*
action and knowledge, 123
*Jñāneśvara*
St., 15, 67
*jñātā*
Knower, 120
*Justinian*
sect, 133
*Kabira, 18, 67, 77*
*Kalā, 125*
*Kāma, 105*
*Kant*
Immanuel, 32, 34, 41, 60, 61, 65, 68, 81, 82, 93, 94, 99, 100, 105-6, 174, 176
*Kārana-Brahma, 118, 130*
*Karma, 101, 102, 122, 124, 126, 138*
*Karmas, 84, 100, 120, 122, 124*
*kārpanya, 124*
*Kartā*
real agent, 95, 103,120,143
*Karunā*
Compassion, 101
*Kārya-Brahma, 117, 124, 128*
*Kenopaniṣad, 3*
*Kierkegaard*
Soren, 4, 22, 23, 27, 28, 29, 149, 150
*Kośas*
sheaths, 151
*Krama Mukti, 94, 98*
*Krṣna*
Lord, 83, 84
*Kshatriya, 83*
***Law of Relativism, 141***
*Laxmi, 118*
***Lectures on Ethics***
Kant, 81
*Leibnitzian*
windowless monad, 147
*Liberation, 7,17,19,98-99, 121-123,131, 138, 175, 176*
*Linguistic Analysts, 148, 176*
*Logical positivists, 148*
*Lord Rāma, 31*
*Lord Śaṃkara, 15*
*Lord Shiva, 31*
*Madhva. See Madhvācārya*
*Mahābhārata, 113*
*Mahat, 125*
*mahāvākya, 127,143*
*Maitri Upanishad, 18*
*Manas, 125*
*Marcel*
Gabriel, 21, 149
*Māyā, 7, 97, 108-09, 157,161*

*McTaggart*
J.M.E, 147
*Metaphysics, 5, 72, 94, 141*
*Mill*
Stuart, 81, 82
*Modern Western Philosophy, 23*
*Monism, 43, 146, 147*
*Moore*
G.E., 82
*Moral Method, 105*
*Morality, 16,17, 58,62-64,80,81,101,108,129,151,167,168*
*mukta*
liberated, 122, 124
*Mundakopaniśad, 67*
*Muslim, 84*
*mysterium, 10*
*Mysterium Tremendum*
subject of experience, 10
*Mystical experience,1, 2, 11,12,30,40,50,58,65-68,74 84,101,103,107,142,143,*
*Mystical Method, 104, 105*
*Mysticism, i, iii, 2-11, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20-31, 33, 35, 36, 45, 54, 59, 65, 69, 72, 73, 78, 79, 80, 87, 113, 141, 152, 153, 164*
*Mysticism in Maharashtra*
Ranade, 11
*Nāmadeva*
St., 16
*Nārāyana, 118*
*Neo-Hegelianism, 3, 163, 169*
*Neo-Platonism, 7, 176*
*Nietzsche, 4, 32, 63*
*Nimbārka. See Nimbārkācārya, See Nimbārkācārya*
*Nirguna, 94, 111, 116, 135,157*
*nirvikalpa pratyaksa*
indeterminate perception, 115
*nirviseśa*
absolutely unqualified, 115
*Nityavibhuti, 118*
*nityayuktvam, 105*
*niyamyatva, 122*
*nuclear holocaust, 173*
*Numinous*
object of spiritual experience, 9, 10
*Otto*
Rudolf, 9, 10, 20, 65, 93
*Pancarātra Samhitā, 113*
*Pande*
S.L., 8
*Paṇini*
of Spiritual Life. *See* Ranade
*parā*
higher, 136
*Paramātman, 104, 136*
*paratantra*
dependent, 7
*paricaryā*
Service, 101
*Pariṇāma*
transformation, 160, 161
*Parināmavāda, 125, 129*
*Parmenides, 72, 141, 148, 171*
*partantrasātta-bhāva*
dependent existence, 114
*Paul*
St., 13, 14, 16, 35, 57
*Peirce*
Charles, 45-47, 50, 53, 56
*Permanence, 54*
*Perry*
R.B., 51
*Phenomenologists, 148*
*Phenomenology, 2, 3, 4, 36, 38, 39, 41, 42*
*Philosophy of Radical, 50*
*Philosophy of Religion. See The Idea of the Holy*
*Plato, 5, 10, 71, 73, 82, 88, 133, 147, 148, 174, 176*
*Pleroma, 132, 138*
*Plotinus*
Neo-Platonic philosopher, 12, 13, 14, 67, 77, 86- 92, 134, 135, 138, 139
*Plurality, 54*
*pour-soi, 24, 25, 26*
*pragma*
Greek, 45
*Pragmatism, 2, 3, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 56, 176*
*prakāra, 118, 123*
*Prākrta, 125*
*Prakrti, 97, 121, 125, 136*
*Prakṛti, 95, 96*
*Prapatti, 124*

*prasāda, 123*
*pratikulasya varjanam*
avoidence of opposition, 124
*Prichard*
A.R., 82, 83, 85
*Principle of Beauty, 91*
*Pringle-Pattison*
A.S., 147, 163
*Protagoras*
criticism of, 141
*Psychology, 140*
*Pure Light*
Principle, 132
*Puruśa, 136*
*Purusottama, 136*
*Purusottamam, 104*
*Puṣṭi-Bhakti, 6*
*Pythagoreanism, 176*
*R.D. Ranade, 154, See Ranade*
*rajas, 125, 137*
*rakshiśyatiti Visvāsah, 124*
*Rāmadāsa*
St., 14, 84, 85, 111
*Ramānuja. See Rāmānujācārya*
*Rāmānuja. See Rāmānujācārya*
*Ramdasa*
St., 13
*Ranade*
R.D., 1, 2, 8, 11-13, 15, 19, 20, 58-70, 72, 74, 79, 84, 85, 93, 94, 95, 97, 98-106, 112, 139, 140, 142, 144, 145, 154, 175,
*Reality, 3, 6, 9-11, 14, 15-18, 24, 29, 30, 35, 44, 47, 49, 59-62, 68, 72, 73, 74, 76, 78, 79, 80, 87, 95, 96, 100, 103, 108, 113, 128, 131, 133, 137, 141, 143, 144, 145, 148, 165, 166, 171, 173, 176, 177*
*Reason, 5, 28, 29, 30, 66, 72, 74, 88, 89, 92*
*Redeemer*
Christ, 134
*Redemption, 132*
*Relativism, 142, 143*
*Religion, 114, 141, 146, 170*
*Royce*
Josiah, 51, 148, 164, 165
*Russell*
Bertrand, 5, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79
*sadvaraka, 130*
*Saguna, 95, 103, 137*
*Saguṇa, 117*
*Sakalakartā*
All-doer, 85
*Śaktis, 131*
*Sālokya mukti, 148*
*Samata*
Equanimity, 101
*samavāya, 129*
*Śaṃkara, 155, See Śaṃkarāćārya*
*Śāṃkara Bhāshya, 155*
*Śaṃkarāćārya, 59, 131, 154, See Śaṃkarā*
*Śaṃkaracharya*
Shri, 42
*Samsāra, 122, 123*
*Śanakasamprādya, 113*
*Sāṇkhya, 6*
*Śanti*
Peace, 100
*Śaraṇāgati, 6*
*Sartre*
Jean-Paul, *21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 149-151*
*sārūpya, 129*
*Sārupya mukti, 145*
*sattava, 125*
*sattvatpatti*
realization of sattvaguna, 42
*satyam jñānam anantarm Brahma*
Brahman is real, pure consciousness and infinite, 115
*Satyam, Sivam, Sundaram*
Truth, Goodness and Beauty, 14
*Śaucha*
Purity, 100
*Savikalpa Pratyaksha*
determinate perception, 115
*Sāyujya mukti, 147*
*Science, 5, 31, 56, 79, 173, 174, 177*
*Scientific knowledge, 174*
*Scylla and Charybdis*
Naive Realism, 41
*second Epoche. See Husserl*
*Self, 12, 15, 18, 19, 49, 59-65, 68, 75, 86, 87, 99, 100, 110, 120-123, 140, 165, 174, 175, 176*
*Self-consciousness, 61, 62, 140*
*Self-Realization, 12, 62*
*Śesha, 121*
*Socrates, 103, 131, 143, 176*

*Sodome, 9*
*śoka*
sorrow, 136
*Sorter*
or Christus, 132
*Spinoza*
Baruch, 13, 68, 73, 77, 118, 120, 147, 174, 176
*Spiritual Experience, 96*
*Sthitaprajña, 102*
*Stoicism, 176*
*subheccā*
good will, 42
*Śuddhādvaita*
Vallabhācārya, 6
*Supermoralism, 63, 83, 100, 101*
*susupti, 104, 111, 143*
*Svabhāva, 95*
*svapna, 103, 111, 143*
*Svatantrasattā-bhāvah*
independent existence, 114
*Śvetaketu, 143*
*syzgies*
pairs of male and female, 132
*Taitiriya Upaniṣad, 3*
*Taittiriya Upaniṣad, 19*
*tajjalān, 105*
*tamas, 125, 137*
*tanumanasi*
diminution of attachment, 42
*Tat tvam asi, 122, 122*
*tat-tvam-asi, 128*
*tejas*
Valour, 101
*Ten Commandments, 83*
*The Evolution of My Own Thought. See Ranade*
*The Idea of the Holy. See Otto*
*Thomas Aquinas*
St., 30, 35
*Transcendence, 96, 97*
*Transcendent, 4, 32, 33, 34, 35, 94, 132, 149, 151, 152*
*Transcendo-Immanence, 97*
*Truth, 7, 14, 22, 30, 47, 49, 56, 62, 75, 111, 140-145, 174*
*Tukārama*
St., 84
*Turiyā*
Transcendental Consciousness, 42
*turyā, 103*
*tychism, 50*
*Unity, 19, 49, 55, 77, 118, 133, 0135*
*Unity of Apperception, 49*
*Upāsanā, 102*
worship, 161, 162
*V.H. Date, 155, 163. See Date*
*Vaikuntha, 118, 121, 125*
*vairāgya*
non-attachment, 175
*Vaisesika, 127*
*Vaiśnava, 125*
*Vaiṣṇavavite, 6*
*Vallabha. See Vallabhācārya*
*value-based Philosophy*
Socratic concept of, 176
Varieties of Religious
William James, 50
*Vāsudeva, 13, 118-120, 122, 124*
*Vedānta, 7, 9, 42,44, 93, 107-113, 123,154-56,160-61*
*Vedāntists, 1*
*vicāranā*
reflection, 42
*Videha Mukti, 94, 98*
*Viśistādvaita, 114, 115, 116, 128, 129*
*Viṣṇu, 7*
*Visnu Purāna, 116*
*Viṣṇuloka, 7*
*Vivarta*
modification, 126, 160, 161
*Vivartavāda, 117,124,160,161*
*vyakta-madhya*
*Ephemeralism*, 98,136
*vyāvhārika*
practical, 76
*Western Philosophy,6,23, 131, 176*
*Wisdom 39,72,76, 88, 89, 124*
*Yāchita maṇḍaṇa nyāya, 2*
*Yādava Prakāsha, 113*
*Yajña, 100*
*Yājñāvalkya, 67, 87*
*Yamunacārya*
grandson of Nāthmuni, 113
*Zoroastrian*
principles of Light and Daskness, 132

**ABOUT THE BOOK**

*Mysticism and Contemporary Philosophy* is primarily devoted to the critical study of systems of contemporary western philosophy on the background of mysticism. It also deals critically with prominent systems of Indian theism, namely the Viśiṣṭādvaita of Rāmānujācārya, Dvaitādvaita of Nimbārkācārya, and Śuddhādvaita of Vallabhācārya. Additionally, some essays in the present volume discuss important problems of moral and religious obligation, relationship with science, philosophy and values, Liberation in Gnosticism, Neo-Platonism, and the Bhagvadgītā and the nature of truth. However, mysticism forms the center around which the different systems and problems revolve, thereby weaving a common thread through all the essays.